The RED CROSS GIRLS *under the* STARS AND STRIPES

MARGARET VANDERCOOK

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THE RED CROSS GIRLS UNDER THE STARS AND STRIPES

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The Red Cross Girls
Under the
Stars and Stripes

By
MARGARET VANDERCOOK
Author of "The Ranch Girls Series," "Stories about Camp Fire Girls Series," etc.

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THE RED CROSS GIRLS UNDER THE STARS AND STRIPES

CHAPTER I

The Call

BARBARA THORNTON stood at the window of her little drawing-room in New York City looking over toward Central Park.

It was a charming room and this afternoon was filled with flowers sent from her mother-in-law's country place on Long Island. Perhaps as an expression of his patriotism, the gardener had cut only red, white and blue flowers, for among the white and red of the fragrant roses were tall stalks of deep, blue-starred delphiniums.

A table was arranged for tea, but because it was summer time, there were tall frosted glasses instead of cups and a big cut-glass bowl to be used later for ice.

Barbara herself was dressed in a thin, white china silk, as if she were expecting guests. She had now been married to Richard Thornton a good many months, and yet looked very little older than the Barbara who had appeared so unexpectedly at the Thornton home, nearly three years before, on her way to do Red Cross nursing in France.

Of course Barbara felt a good deal older. No girl can pass through the experience of war nursing and come out of it unchanged. Moreover, Barbara within three eventful years had also married and had a baby.

Yet this afternoon, amid her lovely surroundings, Bab, who was ordinarily the most cheerful of persons, did not appear to be happy. Her cheeks were more deeply flushed than usual, and every once in a while, in spite of the fact that she was alone, she would wipe the tears furtively away from her fine eyes with a tiny, white lace handkerchief.

For Barbara did not desire the visitors, whom she was expecting at any moment, to discover that she was troubled.

When the ring came at her front door bell, giving herself a hurried glance in the mirror and forcing a smile, Barbara reached the door just after her little Irish maid had opened it.

Standing outside were three persons, one of them an older woman in an exquisite costume of blue and silver, the colors of her eyes and hair, another a young girl of about sixteen and the third a young man.

"Oh, Sonya, I am so glad to see you. It has seemed such ages and so strange to think of you and Nona in Italy without the old group of Red Cross girls! But where is Nona? I thought she was to be with you."

In the beginning of her speech, Barbara Thornton had taken her guest's hand and kissed it with characteristic swiftness and sweetness. Now, before Sonya Valesky could reply to her, she had turned to her other visitors.

"Forgive me if I was rude. I am so glad to see you, although we have never met one another before, I am sure I know who you are. This is Bianca and this is

Mr. Navara. You see, I have had letters about both of you from Italy."

And then Barbara led the way into her drawing-room, while Sonya explained.

"Nona will be here presently. She had to attend to some important business. I believe she wishes to stay after we have gone and talk the matter over with you, Barbara. I don't like to tell you what it is, but I hope you will try to dissuade her."

"Something about which you have tried and failed?" Barbara inquired. "Then I am sure I shall not be successful. You see, Eugenia always said that Nona was the most difficult of us all to influence because she seemed to be the gentlest."

Barbara had seated herself at her tea table and was now trying to serve her guests; the maid had immediately brought in the ice, and cold and hot tea as well. Barbara wished that she had not so much to occupy her as she would like to have been able to devote more attention to studying her guests.

Bianca, the little Italian girl whom Sonya had brought home with her to the

United States as a protégée, Barbara found less interesting than Nona's description of her had led one to expect. Bianca was very pretty, of a delicate, shell-like type that one would not expect in an Italian. At present she seemed either very shy and frightened, or else she was merely demure. Then Barbara remembered that this was exactly what Nona had written was especially characteristic of her. Bianca was not all Italian, her father having been an American, and one must not judge her wholly by appearances.

Moreover, if, as Nona had also said, Sonya had returned to the United States partly because she wished to see less of the young Italian singer whom she had cared for during his convalescence in Italy, apparently she had not been successful thus far.

Even as she looked after her tea party Barbara could see that Carlo Navara, if it were possible, never looked in any other direction than toward Sonya. He was, of course, a great deal younger than Sonya and it was immensely tragic that in

fighting for Italy a wound had destroyed the beauty of his voice; nevertheless, Barbara could not but feel that his attitude was delightfully romantic.

Sonya treated him almost as she did Bianca, in a half maternal, half friendly fashion, and yet Barbara wondered if she felt in the same way toward them both. As Barbara had not seen the young Italian-American during the crossing to Italy, when he had seemed to be merely a crude, vain boy, she could not appreciate what Sonya's influence had done for him. Barbara now saw a remarkably good looking young fellow of perhaps something over twenty, with dark eyes and hair, charming manners and an expression of quiet melancholy which his tragic loss rendered appealing. At present there was little in Carlo's artistic face and manner to suggest his origin, or the little Italian fruit shop in the east end of New York City, where his parents worked and lived and where Carlo was also living at this time.

"I suppose Nona intends returning to France to nurse once again and you do

not wish her to make the trip so soon?" Barbara Thornton remarked, as if she had been following but one train of thought, rather than making a careful and critical study of her guests at the same time.

Sonya Valesky was sitting in a tall carved chair drinking her tea from a clear glass in Russian fashion. She was always perfectly dressed, for she had the art of making whatever costume she wore appear the ideal one. But today she seemed even more so than usual. With her partly gray hair, her deep blue eyes with their dark brows and lashes, and the foreign look she never lost, she was an oddly arresting figure.

She smiled now at her hostess and then shook her head.

"Of course that is true, Barbara, and I am not much surprised at your guessing. But since this is what Nona herself wishes to talk to you about, we had best not discuss it, or she may feel I have tried to influence you. Of course I understand her great desire to help nurse her own countrymen, for Nona has so long hoped

the United States would join the Allies. But I don't think Nona has rested sufficiently long since our return from Italy. You may see a change in her, Barbara, and I can't be cross with her just now. I have not yet found a school for Bianca and I cannot leave her alone in a strange country. When fall comes it will be different, as her mother especially wished her to enter an American school."

This speech was made in a perfectly simple and matter-of-fact fashion with no suggestion of mystery or misfortune. Nevertheless, Barbara Thornton observed a slight change in the expression of the youngest of her three guests. One could scarcely assert that the young Italian girl flushed, or that she made any very perceptible movement. It was merely that her delicate eyelids drooped over her wide blue eyes and that her lips parted with the quick in-taking of her breath. She seemed not so much to mind what had been said as to fear a further discussion of the subject. This is ordinarily true of most of us when there is in our lives any fact which we hope to keep secret.

Barbara Thornton was aware that Bianca's mother was an Italian peasant who was now a fugitive, having sold Italian secrets to a German agent in Florence. Since her disappearance no one knew whether Nannina was alive or dead, so it was small wonder that Bianca should appear unhappy at the mention of her mother's name. However, she answered gently and submissively:

"I am sorry to have the Signora Valesky allow me to interfere with her plans. Beyond anything I too would like to be allowed to do something for the wounded soldiers. I cannot nurse, but I am stronger than I look and there are so many things to be done,——"

But no one answered or paid any attention to Bianca, for at this instant Nona Davis came into the room. Forgetting all her other visitors Barbara at once jumped up and ran forward to greet her.

This summer afternoon Nona had on a dark blue silk dress which accentuated her slenderness and fairness. In truth, she did look too worn out to be planning

to start off, almost immediately, to continue her Red Cross nursing. With only one real holiday, Nona Davis had been nursing almost continuously since the outbreak of the war. As a matter of fact she had the strength which so often seems a characteristic of delicate, ethereal persons.

After embracing Barbara and nodding to her other friends she dropped into a big leather chair, in which she appeared lost, except that it accentuated the shining quality of her pale, yellow hair and the blueness of her eyes, which looked darker, because of the rather strained, whiteness of her face.

"Please give me tea, and tea, and tea, Barbara, more than Eugenia ever allowed us to drink even in our most enthusiastic tea drinking days at the old château in southern France. I think I have been all over New York City this afternoon and seen a dozen people on business."

At this Nona turned with an apologetic glance toward Sonya.

"Don't be vexed, Sonya, please, but I'm sailing for France in a week or ten days.

Of course we can't tell just when, or any other details of our departure. But I find I am very much needed, in spite of all the other Red Cross nurses who have already gone. Why, every few days another Red Cross unit sails! Still, with more and more American soldiers going over every week, until we cannot guess what the number may come to be some day, it may yet be difficult to find enough nurses with experience to care for them."

From its original pallor, Nona's face had changed and was flushed deeply with excitement as she talked.

Both to Barbara and Sonya it occurred as they now watched her, however, that she was trying to show more self control than she actually felt.

Always, Nona had been intensely interested in her Red Cross work and had thrown herself into it with all the ardor and devotion of her southern temperament. But since the entry of the United States into the great European conflict she had undoubtedly developed an added enthusiasm and sense of responsibility.

Just how much she was doing this to aid her in forgetting Eugino Zoli's death and her experience with him in Italy, Sonya Valesky, who had been her companion in Florence, could not guess. Of her friend's interest in the young Italian aviator, Barbara Thornton understood nothing beyond Nona's occasional casual mention of his name in her Italian letters.

"But must you go so soon, Nona? Really I don't think it wise," Sonya remonstrated in response. However, she scarcely spoke as if she expected her advice to be heeded. For in regard to her nursing, Nona was strangely obstinate and unmindful of herself and of other people.

Nona nodded. "Yes." Then she added immediately, "Please do not let us continue to talk of my plans. I am to have old friends, or almost old friends go with me. Mollie Drew and Agatha Burton are home from Italy and are crossing with me to France."

Nona turned toward her hostess.

"I think I wrote you, Barbara, about

the three new Red Cross girls who made the voyage to Italy with us and later were at the American Hospital in Florence. I learned to like them very much, although we were never so intimate as our first group of Red Cross girls. The third girl was Dolores King from New Orleans. I don't know where she is at present; perhaps she has remained in Italy."

"I don't like Miss Burton. I should prefer not to nurse with her," an unexpected voice exclaimed at this instant.

But, as the voice was only Bianca's and as Sonya had almost at the same instant risen to say farewell, no one paid any notice to her speech. Indeed, no one except Barbara Thornton really heard or remembered it. Moreover, Bianca had seen the girl she now mentioned, scarcely more than three or four times.

Sonya was anxious to leave the two old friends alone and therefore hurried Bianca and Carlo away with her, now that tea was over.

As soon as Barbara had said farewell to them and returned to her drawing room,

Nona went straight up to her and placed her hands on the smaller girl's shoulder.

"What is the trouble, Barbara dear? You do not seem so radiant as when I went away. Don't tell me unless you like, but haven't you everything in the world to make you happy? Better be happy when you can, *Barbara mia.* You know Eugenia and Mildred and I used always to count on you as the gayest of the four of us and I want to give only a good report to them, when I see them in France."

Barbara drew away slightly.

"So you have started in ahead of me, Nona, in asking questions! I do not see how I could have permitted it when I had such dozens to ask of you. But how can you expect me to be selfish enough to be happy when poor Mildred and Eugenia are having such tragic times. You know, of course, that Eugenia's husband, Captain Castaigne, has been reported missing. She does not know whether he is a prisoner or dead. Then, too, General Alexis has been arrested by the new Russian Government.

He was a friend, you remember, of the Czar and is suspected of favoring the old régime. Sometimes I wonder if he and Mildred will ever marry. He is so much older and they are so many miles apart. Mr. and Mrs. Thornton, and even Dick, have written to urge Mildred to come home, but she will not leave Eugenia. I suppose they are a comfort to each other in their sorrow."

Barbara walked a little apart from her friend.

Nona was now looking quietly about the charming room filled with books and flowers and soft, rose-colored hangings.

"I did not mean to be inquisitive, Bab, forgive me," she said softly. "I think I must have been thinking of the old days in Europe when we used to share one another's confidences. We were more intimate even than sisters when we were together out there."

Then Nona laughed as if she were making the most inconceivable suggestion in the world:

"Anyhow I don't suppose anything

serious has happened. You are not leaving Dick and you would have told me if the baby was not well."

At this speech Barbara Thornton's entire expression and manner changed. Nona saw that her eyes were wide open and that there was a deeper look of pain in them than she had so far realized.

"No," Barbara answered her quietly; "but then Dick is leaving me, so perhaps it amounts to the same thing. And I did not believe we could ever disagree on any subject after we were married."

CHAPTER II

Another Volunteer

NEVERTHELESS, on that same evening, a little before midnight, seeing Barbara Thorton and her husband, Richard Thorton, together, one could not believe that the difference between them had been a serious one.

Barbara was sitting on the arm of her husband's chair with her feet crossed and slowly swinging them back and forth. She was so small that this did not appear either unnatural or undignified. The brown hair, which a few years ago had been the trial of her life because it was so absurdly short and curling like a young boy's, was now braided and tied with rose-colored ribbons, and Barbara wore a light silk dressing gown over her night dress.

Nevertheless her expression was no less serious, her eyes no further from tears than they were a few hours before when she had talked with Nona Davis.

"So you have decided, Dick, to do what you said, although you know it is against my judgment, and you promised to love, honor and protect me only a short time ago. It is a strange way to keep your word to leave the baby and me so soon. But I don't suppose *we* count."

If Barbara Thornton still looked almost as young as she had upon first meeting Dick Thornton in the front hall of his father's home a little before dawn about three years before, Richard Thornton was very unlike the gay young society man who had first known and rescued her at that trying moment and whom she had afterwards married.

Richard Thornton was far more like his celebrated father than any one at that time would have dreamed him capable of becoming. His brown eyes were steady, his lips firm, although tonight he appeared tired and over-strained.

"That is not fair, Bab, and not like you," he returned slowly. "In most cases I suppose I should think a man had no right to do what I intend doing without his

wife's consent. But I have been fighting this matter out with my conscience for weeks, even for months, and I can see no other way. Besides, I did not really believe you would oppose me, Bab, when the hour actually came. It is so unlike you! Who was it who woke me up and said, goodness only knows what dreadful things to me for not doing my part in the war not three years ago? I can't understand you! Why, when Nona was here at dinner with us a short time ago, you spoke as if you had changed your opinion, or if not that, at least you had decided to forgive me. You *must*, you know, Bab, before I go and I do not know how soon that may be."

However, Barbara continued to frown for another moment and to swing her feet more and more slowly back and forth. In her lap her hands were clenched tight over the same small lace handkerchief.

"Of course I had to pretend to feel differently before Nona Davis, Dick; you surely understood that," she murmured finally. "Why, Nona was so entirely on

your side, so completely in sympathy with you, that she would never have forgiven me if she had realized how I really felt in this matter. You see, you and Nona always did sympathize with each other and you were almost in love with her, Dick Thornton, instead of with me. You need not deny it, for you know you were! There is no use arguing about it now. So I suppose if you were Nona's husband at present, instead of mine, she would be buckling on your armor and urging you to France, instead of being selfish and just loving you and wanting to keep you here with me, in spite of your duty and country and all the other things which may be more important."

Bab's funny mixed speech ended with a catch in her breath and by dropping her face down upon her husband's shoulder.

"But I won't discuss the subject with you any more, Dick, because, of course, I know you are right to do your duty even when I pretend to disagree with you. After all, you could not act any differently. So I suppose your mother and father and

baby will have to get on without *us*. I realized all along that you would never allow the fact that the old trouble with your eyes would make you exempt from military service, to keep you at home when you know there is so much work to be done in beautiful wounded France that you are able to do. Your mother has been braver over your volunteering for ambulance work again than I have this time, dear. It is funny how being happy so often makes one selfish. I realized the difference between Nona Davis and me just this afternoon, and yet I was just as devoted to the Red Cross nursing as Nona, before I married you."

Richard Thornton had placed his arm about his wife's shoulders and was smiling at her with the expression Bab frequently invoked. One could never be perfectly sure whether she were wholly or only half way in earnest, whether her big, wide open eyes would be filled with laughter or tears. For whatever one might be with Bab, angry, hurt or pleased, one could not be bored with her.

"I always knew what you expected of me in your heart, Bab, that is why I went on with my plans when you seemed to be objecting," Dick answered. "Now it has been arranged that, because of my previous experience, I am to do the first line ambulance work in France. I am sorry I am not fit enough to be a real soldier, fighting in the first line as I should like. But my eyes do not seem to have recovered from that old accident as I hoped they would by this time. Of course I could stay here at home and after a while, perhaps, be able to help train the other men for actual service. I have been offered a commission in the second officer's reserve corps. However, I do not want to work at home, but in France, and that as soon as possible."

Dick Thorton paused a moment, and then asked, frowning: "What did you mean by saying 'us' a little while ago, Bab? That mother and father and baby would have to get along without us? Surely you did not mean that you intend to go to France with me, did you, dear? You cannot mean to leave the baby! Besides, much as I

would love to have you near me, if you were in a perfectly safe place, far enough away from the fighting, still, the State Department has declared no passports will be 'issued to soldiers' wives, and I should come under the same head as a soldier in that regard. The government does not wish to have to look after their women as well as their soldiers in a foreign country. They already have enough upon their hands. The department is very positive on this matter."

During her husband's lengthy speech Barbara had listened quietly, but she now made an odd little sound, which one would hardly like to describe as a sniff at the authority of the United States Government, nor yet at her husband.

"Oh you need not think I will interfere with you or your work, Dick, nor yet that the United States Government will consider my presence in France a burden. If I was useful to them once, when I knew much less about the Red Cross nursing than I do at present, I believe I can be useful to them again."

Then Barbara paused, waiting for an exclamation of surprise, perhaps for one of disapproval.

However, partly through mystification, partly because Richard Thornton did not consider that his wife actually meant what she said, even if she had suggested it he continued silent.

Then with the suddenness which surprised no one who knew her intimately, Barbara Thornton's manner all at once became very grave and sweet.

"I wonder if you understood me, dear?" she asked, turning so that her eyes now met her husband's directly.

"If you did, I presume you think I spoke on the spur of the moment and without being in earnest. I know I often do talk in that way. But I have been thinking, oh, for a long time, even before you began to say it was your duty to go back into the ambulance work in France and not claim exemption because of your eyes, that I had no real right to give up my Red Cross work and be married and take things easily, before this terrible

war was ended. You and I, who have lived and worked in France since this war began know only too well how weary, how almost utterly exhausted by their long strain, the French now are. Why, sometimes I believe if our country had not entered the war just when she did—but then I must not speak of failure. For after all, nothing can stop the progress of evolution, no weariness, no mistakes, and evolution is what this war for democracy means. Still, that does not give any one of us the right to be a slacker, and that is the way I have been feeling lately."

After this speech Richard Thornton gazed at his wife, not only with amazement, but with actual disfavor.

"Barbara," he demanded, "isn't being married and having a baby and doing what you can to help with the Red Cross work here and giving all the money we can possible afford, sufficient to content you? I did not suppose you would allow even the war to change you into one of the sentimental women who neglect their own duties to take up with outside ones because they

are more interesting, more exciting, perhaps, than their own responsibilities."

Barbara was silent an instant. Then she answered slowly, as if she were thinking quietly concerning her husband's statement:

"Yes, Dick, but you also are married and also have a baby and also are doing what you can to help with the Red Cross work and giving all and more than you can afford to the war work! Yet you are not content to let the other fellows do the fighting. Why, you have been trying to enlist ever since the United States entered the war and have been terribly discouraged because you were found to be not up to the physical standard."

Barbara now slipped down from the arm of her husband's chair and took a low one of her own. In her dressing gown, with her braids hanging over her shoulders and her chin resting thoughtfully in her hand, she sat apparently deep in thought.

"You know it is a funny thing to me, Dick, why in this world there are in so many cases two rules of conduct, one for a woman and another for a man. I know, of course,

that war has always been considered a man's work, but it is not really, at least not this war. When democracy comes, when it is *real* democracy, and women have their share in it as well as men, I expect it will mean even more to women. You know when things are hard and unfair and there is much poverty and oppression women have always suffered more. You believe that, don't you, Dick? I have heard you say so," Barbara added, with an appealing note, as if she wished to find her husband in sympathy with her on this general subject, if not on the personal one.

"But, Dick, I know, of course, that most women should stay in their own homes and look after their families," she went on with unusual humility. "I am not a real suffragette. Now when I speak or even think about leaving baby I do feel like a criminal and as if I could not bear it. And yet, oh, Dick, I can be more useful with the Red Cross nursing. How much do I do for baby at present, when your mother insists on his having a trained nurse and keeps him with her at the Long Island

place most of the time, because she says New York City is too hot for him in the summer time? And I am so afraid something may happen to him. I allow him to remain away from me because I feel you need me more here in town and because, oh, because I want to be with you even more than with baby, Dick. Do you think I am a very unnatural mother?"

Barbara asked this question so seriously that in spite of his unhappiness and disapproval of her point of view, Dick Thornton laughed aloud.

"You probably are, Bab, but I must say I am glad you still like me as much as you do our son. It is not usual."

"Then you will let me go to France to take up my Red Cross nursing again, Dick dear, won't you, so I may be near you if anything happens to you as it did before? I can go to Mildred and Eugenia and so you need not worry about me; perhaps I can cross with Nona. I did not tell her my plan this afternoon because I wanted your consent first. Now don't you think you ought to permit me to use my conscience

since you have decided you must use yours, regardless of my wish? Perhaps my country also needs me, Dick. I am not very important, but do you know I have been thinking recently that what Christ said about, 'leaving father and mother and giving up everything to follow Him,' is what most of the countries of the world are also asking of us these days."

Dick nodded quietly, deciding not to argue with Barbara any more for the present.

Tonight she was in a mood in which few people ever saw her. However, her husband had known her in just such moods before their marriage, in the days when they were both doing Red Cross work in Europe, soon after the outbreak of the war. So, although he could not accept his wife's suggestion, could not make up his mind that Barbara should again endure the dangers and discomforts of the Red Cross nursing, now that she was his wife and so much nearer and dearer to him, yet he realized that he must discuss the matter with her fairly and squarely. Bar-

bara would not go unless he gave his consent, but she must not feel that he had been arbitrary or selfish in his decision.

"Let us not talk about this any more tonight, Bab. Listen, the clock is striking midnight and we are both tired. However, even if I do give my consent, you know mother and father——"

Barbara laughed. "Oh, for once your mother approves of what I wish to do, husband of mine," she interrupted. "First of all, I spoke to her about baby and she is glad to have the chance to look after him without any foolish interference from me. Then do you know I believe she has another reason, Dick. I don't suppose you can guess what it is! Yet she seems to feel that she and father would both be a little happier about you, if I were only near enough to take care of you, should anything happen. You know I saved your life once, Richard Thornton, although you apparently have forgotten all about it. Of all the ungrateful people——"

However, Barbara did not finish her accusation, for at this instant Dick picked her up and carried her from the room.

CHAPTER III

Somewhere in France

THROUGH a countryside "somewhere in France" a long train was moving slowly. The journey was from a small seaport town where, not long before, two American ships had landed their passengers.

Yet, somehow, the news must have preceded the train, for its way was a triumphal procession. Near the road groups of women and children and old men and partially convalescent soldiers were waving little American flags in response to others which, mingled with the Tricolor, flew from the car windows.

"Long leef to the Uniteed States," the voices outside the train were shouting, while inside more voices called back, "Vive La France."

For the long line of French cars was filled with a thousand of the new American troops on the way to their permanent war base.

When the train had passed away from the villages, through the car windows also reverberated an odd combination of sounds made up of southern drawl, of Yankee twang and the down east and out west dialects, for Pershing's regulars were drawn from every part of the United States.

Some of them were singing "Dixie," others "There'll be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight," or a third group, "We Don't Know Where We are Going, but We're on Our Way."

But finally the train, entering one of the French towns, began slowing down. The soldiers were to be given refreshments from a Red Cross unit. This was one of the little towns which had been partly destroyed, though since cleared of the enemy. The depot had been struck by a shell and very badly damaged, the little French Cathedral across the central square had lost its cross and "Our Lady" now stood with empty arms, the figure of the Christ-child having been broken away.

At present across this square a pathetic little company was marching, carrying tiny American flags.

They wore costumes of all colors and kinds, all degrees of vicissitude, yet somehow each one of the group of children had her own little bit of tricolor as well, so that the French and the American symbols of democracy were intimately mingled.

When the train finally stopped, the children, as if from an unseen signal, kneeled reverently down in the dust of the old square. There were about twenty of them, all children save one.

"What does that mean?" one of the soldiers in a car nearly opposite the square inquired of his companion.

"It means that those children are the war orphans of France and that they think we American soldiers have come to deliver them. If we needed anything more to make us want to fight like——" He stopped abruptly, ashamed perhaps of the huskiness in his voice.

The two young Americans, who were sitting beside each other, were both officers. The young man who had answered was the older and had dark hair, gray eyes and a grave, rather severe face. He wore the uni-

form of a first lieutenant. The other man had light hair, blue eyes, and delicate features, and although at present his expression was also serious, it was a gay, boyish face, without a look of responsibility. However, Hugh Kelley had lately graduated at West Point and received his commission as second lieutenant.

Both soldiers remained quiet, however, while the other men were crowding out the windows and doors to receive their gifts of food from French and American Red Cross nurses and to talk to the French children, who were now coming up close to the cars.

The attention of them both had been attracted by the appearance of a little French girl, the leader of the procession, who had come up near their window. She was not alone, but leading a French soldier by the hand. The man was slight and dark, although one could see only the lower part of his face, as the upper part was bandaged.

The little girl, who must have been about ten or eleven, made an expressive gesture with her hand, touching her head and suggesting a wound. She wished her new

acquaintances to understand that whatever might be said her companion would comprehend nothing.

"He has been hurt, my officer," she said, almost with a slight expression of pride.

Although not trusting themselves to speak, almost simultaneously the two Americans put their hands into their pockets, drawing out all the small money they possessed at the moment.

But the French girl shook her head. "We are not beggars, my Captain and I. We have come to say *bon jour* to the American troops." She spoke in French. Then seeing that the young officers continued to thrust their money toward her, she accepted it finally with a little graceful gesture, and nodding a friendly farewell went on along the line of cars gazing into each window in equally interested fashion, and still leading her officer by the hand. He went without resisting, while now and then she spoke to him gently as one would to a beloved child.

Lieutenant Hugh Kelley drew in his breath in a faint-hearted whistle. "Some poor French chap who has lost his mind or

his memory or both and is living in one of the nearby hospitals. I suppose the little French girl is an orphan and they are somehow trying to make things up to each other. Well, I might as well confess, Lieutenant, I'll not forget that child or that poor fellow soon. Maybe our own men——"

"Oh, cut it out, Hugh," Lieutenant Martin answered, "it is one of the fortunes of war. But that was an interesting little French girl. There *is* something about her one will remember. See they have stopped now and are talking to Miss Davis and her friends."

For it was true that in a small compartment, separated from the rest of the long train, was a small group of American Red Cross nurses, which included Nona Davis, Barbara Thornton, and the two nurses with whom Nona had worked in Italy, Mollie Drew and Agatha Burton.

Their presence on the soldiers' train was due to an accident. Their Red Cross ship, which had arrived at a French port at nearly the same time the American soldiers' transport, had failed to make proper arrange-

ments with the French authorities. As a matter of fact, the Red Cross ship got in several days before she was expected and there were no transportation facilities to take the nurses and doctors to the various hospital stations at which they expected to work. Therefore a few of them were obliged to travel whenever any opportunity presented.

Lieutenant John Martin had been right. It was Nona Davis who had first discovered the little French girl and her companion just outside their window, looking in at them with the same expression of friendly interest she had shown the American officers.

After the first sensation of shocked surprise which the young Frenchman occasioned, Nona smiled and began talking to the little girl.

"Would you mind telling me your name? Mine is Nona Davis, and I am a Red Cross nurse on my way to one of the new hospitals."

The child nodded, showing that she understood Nona's French, which was fairly good after her past experience in France.

"Jeanne Barbier, and this is Monsieur, Le Capitan. My friend has no other name now, for he has forgotten his old one," the little French girl returned gravely, yet cheerfully, for in a way she had grown too accustomed to tragedies to be overwhelmed by them. Besides, Jeanne had the gallantry of her race. Whatever she might suffer, one smiled before strangers.

"You see, he remembers nothing about himself, neither his family, nor where he has come from, and I, I too was alone, until we found each other."

Jeanne still held the French officer's hand and he clung to her without speaking, as if she only gave him a hold on earth. Otherwise his mind wandered into what dim fancies, what tragic memories no one could guess.

But while this conversation was taking place, Barbara Thornton had crowded up beside Nona and was gazing at the little French girl through dimmed eyes. Mollie Drew was also looking out her window.

Jeanne was a typical little French girl, with wide open dark eyes and heavy lashes,

a sallow, colorless skin, bright red lips and a slender, pointed chin.

She now glanced from Nona to Barbara and her expression became puzzled and sympathetic. She did not appreciate that she and her companion were the cause of the American mademoiselle's tears, but wondered what was making her unhappy. Jeanne believed Barbara a young girl at this first sight of her.

The truth was that Barbara had been fighting alternate stages of regret at having left home and of being glad she was coming to France, every half hour or so since her departure. But she had been more often miserable than happy, and Barbara resented unhappiness. Moreover, she had no one to confide in, since Nona, who was her only intimate friend in their Red Cross unit, had intensely disapproved of her returning to France. As nearby as she had been able to have a confidant, Barbara had made one of Mollie Drew, as the two girls were sufficiently alike in temperament to feel drawn to each other.

But as Barbara had just suffered a par-

ticularly deep wave of homesickness in the past ten minutes, the little French girl with her thin, half-starved look and her smiling eyes, and the utter pathos of the man accompanying her, had unnerved her.

"Is Mademoiselle ill, is there anything I can do?" Jeanne asked with entire seriousness. In the past months she had grown accustomed to being useful to a great many people. She ran errands at a convalescent hospital, where they were keeping certain of the soldiers who had no homes and no families to whom they could be returned. These soldiers had become the permanent wards of France. It was in this hospital Jeanne had found her Captain.

In response Barbara could only shake her head helplessly. She was glad to have Nona and Mollie distracting the little girl's attention by the gift of a box of candy, which had been a farewell present. While they did this she was studying the French officer.

It was strange how one was able to see he had been a gallant gentleman and soldier of France in spite of his misfortune. There was something in his appearance which

fairly haunted Barbara. He hung his head now and every movement of his body was uncertain, yet in the once slender, graceful figure, the small, well-shaped head, the hands and feet, one could see that Jeanne's officer had been a man of breeding and distinction.

"Why don't his own people look for him? Surely something should be done," Barbara murmured, almost indignantly. "Jeanne, you must do your best to help your Captain find his friends. There must have been some mark upon him, his number, the uniform of his regiment."

But before Jeanne could reply, the train upon which the American soldiers and the four Red Cross nurses were traveling, began pulling away from the station, and Jeanne stood waving farewell.

During the entire experience Agatha Burton had remained quiet and uninterested. She was a surprisingly calm and self-possessed person.

Several times since her own introduction to Agatha, Barbara had recalled Bianca's unexpected speech in her drawing-room.

Barbara occasionally felt she agreed with Bianca. However, she did not intend to be prejudiced against any one, and Agatha certainly had tried to be kind and considerate of her, more so than Nona, who was her old friend. Agatha had a fashion of doing one small, unexpected favors; it was almost as if she deliberately intended to make you like and trust her.

"Would you mind telling me something of Madame Castaigne?" Mollie Drew asked, after the slight pause which usually follows a train's leaving a station. "As she is to have charge of the new American hospital where we are to work, I am interested. Is she difficult to work under? I feel a little afraid of her, she seems to be so wonderful herself."

Nona smiled and shook her head. "Oh, don't feel afraid of Madame Castaigne, although I confess that Mildred Thornton, Mrs. Thornton's sister-in-law, and Barbara and I were very much so in the days when we'd just met Eugenia on our first trip to Europe for the Red Cross nursing. She had not married then. But Madame Castaigne

has been through a great deal since. About a year or more after our work in Europe she married a French officer, Captain Henri Castaigne. He was a member of the old nobility, but too democratic in his ideas to use his title. He has since disappeared and is either dead or a prisoner in Germany. I don't think Madame Castaigne knows. But she has kept on just the same with her hospital work and has been helping to organize the new hospitals for our American soldiers in France. Eugenia has a great deal of money, and, except what she uses for her husband's mother, she is devoting everything she has to the Red Cross. I only hope we may not find her too much changed."

But Nona stopped talking because of an interruption. Some one had just come to the door of their compartment and knocked, and Barbara was opening it.

Outside stood two figures, Lieutenant John Martin and his companion, Lieutenant Hugh Kelley.

The first officer's manner betrayed the impression that although intending to be polite, he was greatly bored. As a matter of

fact, he believed that women and girls had no part in a soldier's life and except that men were necessary for other work, even Red Cross nurses were superfluous.

But by chance Lieutenant Martin and Nona Davis had a slight previous acquaintance. Lieutenant Martin was a native of Georgia, but had been educated at the Charleston Military Academy before going to West Point. In Charleston he had known some friends of Nona's and had been introduced to her, meeting her, perhaps, only a few times afterward. For even as a boy, Jack Martin had been supposed to be either very shy or very disdainful of girls. He did not seem to have the least natural interest in them. Yet he really knew almost nothing of women, having been brought up by a bachelor uncle, who was himself a soldier, and this may have accounted for his ungraciousness.

Both he and Nona were surprised, upon seeing each other, into acknowledging their former acquaintance. Neither really intended it. Afterward, Lieutenant Martin had really regretted the accidental meeting,

since it had drawn him into situations a little like the present one.

Hugh Kelley and he were on the railroad platform, when the sight of four American Red Cross nurses, standing together and apparently waiting to take the same train, had attracted their attention.

Yet introducing Hugh had been the real complication. He could scarcely be accused of disliking girls.

However, he continued to stand at the door of the compartment waiting for Lieutenant Martin as his superior officer to open the conversation and explain their presence.

"I, we," Lieutenant Martin began stiffly, and then stopped, as if he never were to go on.

Then he turned to the younger man.

"Do, Kelley, speak for us both, won't you? Give an excuse for our appearance. For if you are not an Irishman, with that name of your's, your ancestors surely were."

Hugh Kelley laughed.

"Oh, the situation isn't so serious; please don't be alarmed. It is only that Lieutenant Martin is so in the habit of issuing com-

mands lately that he does not know how to ask a favor. And it's a favor I be after askin'," Hugh continued, breaking into a fairly poor imitation of the Irish brogue, somewhat to Mollie Drew's amusement.

"You see, I have been feeling rather homesick for the past few hours, so I mustered up courage to ask our Colonel if Lieutenant Martin and I could come in here to talk to you. I told him, Miss Davis—hope you do not mind—that you and Lieutenant Martin were old childhood friends; kind of boy and girl business, you know the kind. So the Colonel said we might come if I brought Martin along, and if we did not mention the fact to any of the other fellows in our car for fear of starting a riot in your direction. So I dragged Martin with me." Hugh ended with a perfectly deliberate intention of confusing his superior officer, perhaps in revenge for past severities.

Then he dropped down into a seat between Barbara Thornton and Mollie Drew.

"I say, isn't this good luck? Anyhow, it is more than I deserve," he concluded boyishly.

Lieutenant Martin took a place beside Nona. He appeared really more uncomfortable than necessary.

"I should like to court-martial Kelley for that speech, Miss Davis. How can I possibly talk to you with such a beginning?"

CHAPTER IV

With the American Army in France

"BUT, Gene, the hospital is so perfect in every detail! I don't see how you have managed and it is so fine to be working here in France with you again. But best of all, you don't seem to have changed and I was afraid——"

Nona ended her speech abruptly, not having intended making this final remark.

Three or four hours before she and Barbara Thornton and the two other Red Cross nurses had arrived at the new hospital, set aside for the care of the American soldiers of which Eugenia, Madame Henri Castaigne was in charge.

For the first two hours Eugenia had been too occupied to do more than greet her old friends and make the acquaintance of the new girls. But since dinner she had been showing the four of them over the hospital.

So far there were not a great many pa-

tients, only a few of the soldiers with not very serious illnesses, so they were receiving the most devoted attention.

Then, after their survey of the hospital, Eugenia and Mildred Thornton with the four newcomers had gone up to their own rooms.

The nurses' rooms were on the top floor of the building, which had once been a private country place, converted, largely under Eugenia's direction, into a modern hospital.

Instead of occupying one long room like a hospital ward, it was one of Eugenia's ideas that the Red Cross nurses required privacy and quiet after the long strain of their work. So the space had been divided into small apartments, two girls in each room. Nona and Eugenia were to have one, Barbara Thornton and Mildred Thornton, her sister-in-law, the one adjoining, while Mollie Drew and Agatha Burton were across the hall. The half dozen other nurses had the same arrangements.

At Nona's last words, Eugenia Castaigne's face had changed in expression alightly, but she made no reference to what

the words had implied. However, Nona remembered that Mildred Thornton had already written and had also told them, that Eugenia never discussed Captain Castaigne's disappearance and no one knew what her real feeling was, or even if she believed her husband dead.

Just now and then in this world of our's and but very rarely, one may be a witness to what may well be called the miracle of love.

Eugenia's marriage to Captain Castaigne was one of these miracles. The surprise of his caring for her when she considered herself so unworthy, the charm of his companionship, although they had seen each other seldom, whatever it was, the fulfilment of the best in her, which comes to some women only through marriage had come to Eugenia. This she could never lose. So the somewhat narrow-minded, even if intelligent and conscientious, old maid had disappeared forever and Eugenia, or *Madame Eugenie*, as the French people called her, was one of the most gracious and sympathetic of women.

Moreover, she had a genius for hospital

work. Whatever demands she might make upon her assistants under the pressure of necessity, she was never unjust and never spared herself, two great traits in the fine executive nature.

"Oh, I am all right and never more interested than in our American hospital, Nona. I thought I could never care for any soldiers as I have for the gallant French *poilus*, always gay and full of courage even to the end. But now when I think of our American boys coming on this long journey to fight for the triumph of Christ's idea of human equality—for that is what, in its largest sense, this war against Germany means—well, perhaps I am too much of an enthusiast.

"But there I am on my present hobby and I did wish to talk just of personal matters this first night."

Eugenia had raised her arms and was taking down her long, heavy brown hair.

It was only about eight o'clock in the evening, but the four friends had planned to undress and have the hours before bedtime for a long talk.

In the next room Barbara was re-reading a letter which she had found waiting for her at the hospital, written by her husband. She and her sister-in-law were discussing this and other family matters.

Nona had already undressed and put on her dressing gown, a lovely blue silk negligée which Sonya had given her, since Sonya now insisted on Nona's having pretty clothes. She was now half sitting, half lying on the bed with her pale yellow hair rippling over the pillow.

Eugenia turned to put on her own lavender dressing gown and then stood looking down on the other girl.

"Tell me, Nona—of course I understand you don't have to confess unless you wish—but you know I have often wondered; are you especially interested in any one? So far, you alone of our group of four Red Cross girls seems to have escaped, and I certainly never dreamed in those early days that both Barbara and I would be married, Mildred engaged and you remain free. Is it because you are too much of a Fra Angelico angel (who was it who used to insist you

looked like one?) to feel ordinary emotions?"

Nona laughed, glad that Eugenia could discuss this particular subject in so cheerful and natural a fashion, yet changing color slightly.

"Do you wish me to confess, Gene, that I am so much less attractive? Because, after all, that must be the truth."

Nona tried to keep her voice perfectly steady and her eyes directly regarding Gene's. Nevertheless, to her own annoyance she found that Eugenia's question had brought back the memory of Eugino Zoli and the last night in the old Italian garden. Again she wondered if he had ever really cared for her.

Something in her expression may have betrayed her, for Eugenia changed the subject.

"Don't you think Mildred is keeping up wonderfully well when she hears so little news of General Alexis? He is still a prisoner and must remain one until the new government discovers that in spite of his personal friendship for the former Czar, he

believes in democracy. It seems rather a pity at present that they must lose the services of so fine an officer. But, by the way, Nona, I meant to tell you, I had a letter from a friend of yours, a Dr. Latham. He wrote me he had not seen you in the United States, but that Sonya had told him you were coming to me. He seems to feel he would like to help us here at our American hospitals, not this one alone, but wherever he may be most useful. Of course I know him by reputation.

Nona frowned slightly.

"Oh, I was not sure Dr. Latham had returned from Italy, although he did not intend to stay after he had been able to teach his new treatments of wounds to the Italian surgeons. He is a wonderful surgeon, but a great bear of a man, and in a way I am sorry if he is to come here. He took up such a lot of my time in Florence."

But at this instant Barbara Thornton made a pretense of knocking on the door, although she entered without waiting for a reply.

"Don't you and Nona think it would be

wiser for all four of us to be in the same room when we talk, Gene, instead of having to repeat everything we say? I have just had a most cheerful and agreeable letter from Dick. But do you suppose that husband of mine deigns to tell me where he is? This 'somewhere in France' address must get on a good many people's nerves. But he need not be afraid I shall try to look him up or interrupt him. I expect to be as busy as he is."

Barbara took hold of Eugenia by one hand and drew her to a seat beside her on the bed.

"Hope I shall be a more satisfactory Red Cross nurse this time than I was at the beginning, Gene. Remember, you wished to send me home then? But you always were wonderful. Do you know, I think you were intended to be a Mother Superior or a Lady Abbess, if you had lived in other days, Gene? As it is, I would rather work under you as a Red Cross nurse than any other woman in Europe."

"Don't be a goose, Bab," Madame Castaigne returned with just a sufficient remin-

der of her one-time severity to make the three other nurses, including Barbara, smile.

"But there, I can't remember you are a married woman with a baby child. It was fine of you to come over to us to help, under the circumstances."

Barbara hesitated and flushed. "I don't wish to sail under false colors, Gene, with you or Mildred or Nona. I think I came to Europe half because Dick is here and the other half because I wish to help. Do you think I can ever manage to see him? I couldn't have endured his being so far away."

Barbara looked so absurdly childish and forlorn that both Nona and Mildred were amused. It was Gene these days who understood.

"Of course you will, Bab. Dick may even be helping with the ambulance work not far from here some time. In any case I expect we can manage a meeting. But if you children are not too tired tomorrow I want to take you over to our American camp. I have special permission for us to be shown as much as we have time to see.

Later the officers may not wish us and also we may be too busy. It is all so wonderful and inspiring."

Eugenia ceased talking and for an instant no one spoke. This was because they all heard a curious noise just outside the closed door, one that puzzled Nona and Barbara. However, the next instant the door swung slowly open and a great silver-gray figure entered the little room and padded softly up to Eugenia and there stood gravely regarding the two newcomers.

"This is our American hospital mascot. You remember Monsieur Le Duc, or Duke as we used to call him, don't you, Nona, you and Bab? After Henri disappeared, in the most curious fashion, without anyone being able to explain how he could have known, Duke grew so utterly wretched my mother-in-law wrote me she thought the poor fellow would die. So I went back to the chateau to see him. He grew better then, but I had to bring him away with me. He never leaves me when it is possible to be near. I think he has an idea he must take care of me. At first I was afraid he was

going to be a nuisance, but wherever I have been the soldiers have adored him. Come, Duke, won't you speak to your old friends?"

And, as if he had only been waiting for Eugenia's suggestion, the great dog walked softly over first to Nona and then to Bab, gravely extending his paw to each of them in turn.

"You look older, don't you, poor old Duke," Bab whispered, putting her brown head down on the dog's silver-gray one. "Here is hoping for happier days!"

But she said this so that Eugenia did not hear her. Aloud she announced:

"I should think I *would* like to see the American camp. I never imagined such a privilege. You know, Gene, there was the dearest young officer whom we met on the train, a Kentucky boy. He said he was awfully anxious to introduce some of his brother officers to me, only he did not see how he was ever to manage, the regulations were so severe."

Nona raised herself up on one elbow.

"Barbara Thornton, kindly remember you are married and Eugenia merely said

she wished to show us the American camp, not to entertain us by having us meet the soldiers. Really, you know I never approved of your coming over to nurse again, but I did not anticipate this particular form of frivolity, considering that Mildred is your sister-in-law."

Barbara looked so extremely comfortable at this accusation that both Eugenia and Mildred laughed, and this was what Nona had hoped for, since Duke's unexpected appearance had brought back memories difficult to take lightly.

The American hospital, where the four American Red Cross girls and their new companions were to work, was at the edge of one of the villages in which the great permanent war camp for the United States soldiers had been located.

Yet one could scarcely say the camp had been located in the village, since it not only included the French village, but also covered the surrounding country on all sides. In the little French houses of frame and plaster the officers and as many of the soldiers as possible were quartered. But wherever it

was necessary, with the number of men increasing each day, barracks were being built by the soldiers themselves and their French comrades, while a few tents dotted the fields like a sudden up-springing of giant mushrooms.

Not long after daylight next morning Eugenia, Mildred Thornton and the four new nurses started for the village.

They wished to be in time for the morning drill. A moment or so before their arrival, a little way off they heard the clear, sharp call of the bugle and then the tramping of many thousands of feet.

After a sentry had investigated her permit, Eugenia led the way to the roof of one of the little French houses. She seemed to know its occupants and to have received permission beforehand. The roof was not flat, few roofs of the houses in French villages are, though one finds them almost always with the broad straight roofs in the larger apartment dwellings in Paris. But this small house had a little balcony at the top, and steep steps, almost like a ladder, leading from the inside.

From the balcony one could see the great drill ground, where the United States troops were now forming in lines.

Over the fields of France floated the Stars and Stripes.

But the American girls, who had lately arrived, could not see plainly, for the mist in their eyes.

CHAPTER V

Introductions

BUT when the drill was over the American girls did not come down from their place of observation. There was still so much of absorbing interest. The soldiers, having completed this work, had still more important training to be gone through with during the morning.

The girls were able to watch a number of them learning to throw hand grenades, small bombs not much larger than oranges. The practice bombs were not explosive, nevertheless Barbara and Nona and Mollie Drew found themselves intensely interested. They had almost the sensations of enthusiastic baseball fans, for the American boys showed such skill with the grenades, that their boyhood playing of the national game must have been of value.

Other soldiers were working at trench

digging and farther along on the artillery practice range big guns were being moved, trained on their target and made ready for firing with amazing swiftness. Beyond was also an aviation camp, scarcely discernible because of the distance. Here other American boys were completing their final lessons in air fighting, preparing themselves to rival the gallant Lafayette corps of American airmen in the service of France, who had become world famous for their amazing feats of valor and skill.

But most extraordinary of all the spectacles to the Red Cross nurses was the encampment of "tanks." These giant monsters were rolling about on their especial parade ground, looking like prehistoric monsters. The soldiers were like midgets beside them. They lumbered along like huge turtles carrying houses on their backs and climbing great objects, set in their paths, as if they did not exist.

However, there are scenes to which one is now and then a witness which may be too overwhelming. Actually one sees and feels so much that the eyes and mind and even the emotions become exhausted.

Mollie Drew was the first of the six girls to feel she could endure no more. She had seen such tremendous things and, moreover, had gone through with such a conflict of sensations, joy that the American soldiers were now to play a great part in the world struggle and sorrow over the inevitable tragedies which must befall them, and a strong urge that they learn these final lessons in making war as soon as possible, that they might get into the fight and have it all over with, perhaps, before another year.

So that by and by, Mollie began to feel not only tired but almost exhausted. Yet she did not wish to interrupt the others nor to ask any one of them to return to the hospital with her.

She could overhear Eugenia talking to Agatha Burton and had seldom seen Agatha so animated or in earnest.

"No, I cannot tell you how many American troops have arrived in France. No one outside the government is informed. But in any case it would be impossible, as new contingents of soldiers are reaching France almost every day."

Mollie caught the sense of this speech, but realized that each word was becoming more and more indistinct. She had a stupid habit of occasionally growing faint, but not for a great deal would she have Madame Castaigne discover her weakness so soon after her journeying to France for the Red Cross nursing.

If she could only get down the narrow staircase and away from the others before she was observed! Mollie could not of course realize how completely her usual bright color had faded. She took a few steps and at the top of the stairs caught hold of the narrow railing.

But, fortunately for Mollie, although she was not aware of it, Barbara Thornton had been watching her for the past few moments.

She had noticed Mollie becoming steadily paler until the little freckles, which were ordinarily inconspicuous, showed plain, had seen the peculiar strained look in Mollie's deep gray eyes. Also, she understood that Mollie would not wish to create a scene and above all wished to avoid Eugenia's attention.

So, when Mollie moved away, Barbara moved quietly after her, placing her arm firmly about the other girl's waist.

"Miss Drew and I are tired and are going down; we will wait for you, don't hurry," she called back.

As a matter of fact, as soon as she reached the landing, Mollie did feel almost herself again. She wished to go outdoors at once, but Barbara insisted that they find a place to sit down and rest.

The stairs from the tower ended in a tiny hall and opposite was a room with the door open.

Barbara was under the impression that this room was the usual sacred drawing-room of some French family. But as soon as they crossed the threshold she appreciated that, whatever the room had been, it was now being used by American soldiers. There was a variety of boots and army leggings in one corner, a khaki coat swung over a chair and a disordered table covered with American books and papers. Dust and mud were on the floor.

"I don't think we ought to intrude in

there," Mollie objected, hesitating and speaking a little nervously.

But Barbara, who was very difficult to awe, walking calmly in, seated herself in one of the empty chairs.

"Certainly we must stay here until you are rested and feeling a little stronger. You can scarcely stand up and I don't wonder, after being on your feet for hours, the first day after our trip. I am awfully tired myself. No one is coming back to this room for the present; the soldiers and officers are too busy. If anyone does appear we must simply explain. I am curious anyhow to know how Eugenia managed to bring us here without introducing us to anyone. Perhaps the French people in this neighborhood are becoming accustomed to Americans taking possession of their homes."

Barbara talked quietly and without any suggestion of possible embarrassment, really because she had no idea that anyone would discover them before Eugenia came down.

She was therefore more surprised and embarrassed than Mollie at an unexpected noise just outside the open door.

However, both girls jumped to their feet looking conscience stricken.

The young soldier at the door uttered a low whistle, took off his wide-brimmed hat and then made a low bow.

"Do you know," he began, "I was as mad, well, we will say mad as a March hare, although that was not my original speech over being sent here to clean up my superior officers' quarters. I came over to France, you know, to fight Germans, not to act as a housemaid. But, of course, if I had any idea that Lieutenant Martin was giving a reception, why before his guests arrived——"

The young private was over six feet tall, had fine white teeth and broad shoulders and at this moment his eyes were so full of surprise and amusement that no one would have thought of their color.

"But we are not guests and we are going right away," Barbara stammered. "For goodness sake don't let anyone else find us here!"

Barbara was older and married and, of course, should have been the more self-

possessed of the two intruders. But somehow Mollie experienced an immediate understanding and sympathetic appreciation of the situation existing between her and the newcomer.

"We have been watching the morning drill and afterwards came in here to rest, not dreaming anyone would discover us at such a time. Did you say it was a part of your duty to help keep your officers' quarters in order. If it is, do you know I don't think you have been very successful," and Mollie's color returned and her lips parted in a rather pretty Irish fashion of suddenly turning up at the corners to express amusement, as she looked around the disordered apartment.

The young man nodded.

"I don't suppose I could hold my job for a week in your house, would I, unless you happened to take a fancy to me and wished to show me how housecleaning is accomplished? You see, before I undertook to be a soldier, why I'm afraid I belonged to the 'idle rich'. I did not even know this business of keeping one's

own posessions in order was a part of every regular private's job. I have had some training in the last months, but I can still shoot straighter and ride better than I can do other things."

And the young fellow looked in such utter disgust and consternation at the task ahead of him that Mollie laughed a second time.

"There is to be an inspection of quarters this afternoon and, as the Lieutenant is busy, I've been detailed to have this room shipshape."

Mollie glanced toward Barbara.

"Suppose we help?" she suggested, at least until Madame Castaigne and the others come down. No one will ever know. You see, 'Monsieur Sammee,' (that is what French people are calling you, isn't it?) if you were a Red Cross nurse as Mrs. Thornton and I both are, you would know everything worth knowing of domestic tasks."

Then, without waiting for Barbara's agreement, Mollie began straightening the dusty, disordered table in a quiet, skilful fashion.

The next instant Barbara had joined her at another task and soon the three of them were hard at work, the young soldier obeying orders.

When Eugenia and Mildred, Nona and Agatha finally looked into the room to see if Barbara and Mollie could possibly be found in there, they were for an instant overcome with amazement.

Eugenia was far from pleased. However, the scene was too absurd to take seriously or to speak reprovingly about.

This time Mollie became embarrassed and past being able to explain the situation. Moreover, she was conscious that the soldier, whose name she did not even know and therefore was unable to introduce to Madame Castaigne, was now laughing at her, although he kept every part of his face grave except his eyes.

However, Barbara spoke at once.

"Hope we have not done anything very wrong, Eugenia. But you see, after all, our Red Cross rules are that we succor anyone in distress. We do not know whom we have helped this time, but he was undoubtedly in distress."

At this Barbara turned to the young man, who came forward to speak to Madame Castaigne. He had recognized her as having charge of one of the nearby American hospitals.

He gave his name, Guy Ellis, to Eugenia, but of course the others heard him.

"I don't know exactly what I am to say to any of you," Eugenia protested in answer to Barbara and shaking hands with their new acquaintance, "because I never dreamed of any such situation. However, I am glad I discovered you instead of an officer. But please come with me and meet Madame Bonnèt. She has given up this house of hers to our soldiers, but she and her daughter, Berthe, are living in a tiny place in the garden. She is a great friend of mine and managed to get us permission to use her tower up-stairs this morning for watching the drill. She told me no one would be here, so we would not be a nuisance."

Eugenia turned to Nona.

"Madame Bonnèt is raising carrier pigeons for the use of the French army.

The ones she has now are to be our American messengers when we need them."

Eugenia made no suggestion that the young soldier accompany them, but he walked on quietly beside Mollie and Barbara. After all, Madame Bonnèt was his friend as well.

CHAPTER VI

Carrier Pigeons

BEHIND the officers' house was a carefully tended little home garden. There were no flowers, except a few perennials, blooming on unconscious of the war which for the past three years had been destroying the land that nourished them.

But between the rows of feathery carrots and the stiff spikes of onions, a girl was kneeling.

She looked up in surprise at the approach of so large a number of people, then smiled in response to Eugenia's greeting, although she did not rise immediately.

She wore a smock of a coarse blue material, covering her from her throat to her ankles. Her head was bare and she seemed to have the very blackest hair one could imagine and her eyes were equally so. Her face, however, was tanned, and was a little worn and sad. But seated on her head and

shoulders and hovering everywhere about her, were a flock of pigeons, fluttering and talking apparently to themselves and to her.

Close behind the garden was the pigeon house, set high up and painted gray, with bright blue lines about the small windows. From the inside came the cooing and mourning, the sounds of the most delicate and romantic of love murmurings, as well as the noises necessary to the soothing of small, new families. But the sounds were unmistakable; there are no others like those of a dove cote.

A little farther to one side stood a small house, which could hardly contain more than two rooms.

Coming out of the front door, attracted by the footsteps of so many visitors, was Madame Bonnèt. She was not young or graceful like her daughter, Berthe, yet the greater number of the girls found their eyes turning admiringly toward the older woman. Without immediately knowing why, they recognized her attraction. But this was because Madame Bonnèt typified so much

that is finest and strongest in the French national life.

She was large, with a deep bosom and broad shoulders, but with narrow hips. She had dark hair, black almost as Berthe's and as free from gray; her skin was as smooth and clear one might say as satin, but there was a softness and a fragrance to Madame's skin that no satin ever had.

She wore a mourning dress, but with a wide white apron over it and a white collar about her full throat.

Smiling a welcome to her unknown guests, Madame Bonnèt opened her arms to Eugenia Castaigne and Eugenia kissed her as no one had ever seen her do to anyone else.

Their display of affection was perfectly simple and natural and of course over in a moment. However, Mildred and Barbara and Nona, Eugenia's old friends, who had been with her at the time of her marriage, understood that there was some close bond between the two women, the one who had lost her husband, the other whose position was perhaps worse, since she did not know what fate had come to hers.

"I nursed Madame Bonnèt's son. Her husband, who was an officer, and one son have been killed since the war began; the other is at Verdun," Eugenia whispered quietly to Nona, while Madame Bonnèt was shaking hands with Mildred Thornton and while Barbara and Mollie and Agatha were waiting to speak to her. Eugenia spoke as if she were making a perfectly ordinary statement.

"She and her husband were raising carrier pigeons more as an amusement than for any other reason when the present war broke out," Eugenia continued. "They immediately sent all they had to the French government and the government has been using them for their messengers, when all their wonderful telephone and telegraph systems break down, as they do now and then. But I am going to ask Madame Bonnèt to talk to you. It is fascinating to learn what part carrier pigeons can play in war."

Madame Bonnèt was now walking toward the dove cote with her visitors.

A few moments before she had picked up

a large platter of corn, which the American soldier had afterwards taken from her. At present he was walking in front of the little procession and evidently he and Madame Bonnèt were great friends, since he was looking back over his shoulder and telling her of his recent domestic rescue.

And Madame Bonnèt was laughing and shaking her head.

"It is all right so long as Lieutenant Martin does not find you out."

"Oh, Martin is a martinet," Guy Ellis returned. "Yet even Martin should feel honored by Mrs. Thornton and Miss Drew's attention. However, the favor was done for me, wasn't it, Miss Drew?"

At this moment the young man's expression changed rather oddly from its gay look to one that was almost sullen. Yet his hand went up to his forehead in a military salute. He had just seen the officer, whom they had been discussing, walking along the same path in their direction with Lieutenant Hugh Kelley.

But no one else had observed them. For at this instant Madame Bonnèt had come

close up to her dove cote and having taken the bowl of corn into her own hands, held it up for a moment, as if before feeding her flock she were invoking a blessing from the sun.

The pigeons must have been accustomed to this. For they came out of their house and ranged themselves in a long, fluttering row on the eaves. But although they moved impatiently, they did not at once fly down.

The birds were of several colors, white and black and a soft gray, yet the larger number were iridescent, shining like bright jewels under water. The girls discovered that carrier pigeons are a little larger than ordinary ones, with long wings reaching to the end of their tails.

Then, at a little signal from Madame Bonnèt, they came, enfolding her in a moving cloud, settling on the edge of the bowl, eating the corn from her hand. Yet the most of them were on the ground where she scattered handfuls of grain.

The group of Red Cross girls were fascinated, but Nona Davis particularly so.

Leaving Eugenia, she slipped over and stood next Madame.

"I wonder if you will do me a favor? Allow me to come over some morning and take your picture here with your pigeons? I have a friend in New York whom I should so like to have see it."

Madame Bonnèt smiled and then shook her head.

"You can have my picture at any time you like, so far as I am concerned, my dear. But you see, my house has been given up to the army and several of the officers are quartered here. I am afraid Lieutenant Martin would object to photographs of any part of the encampment. We are having to be so careful that the enemy does not discover where the camp is located and there is always the danger from spies."

Nona flushed. She was glad that no one except Madame Bonnèt had heard her request.

"Of course. I should have thought of that. One would suppose I was a novice and knew nothing of military requirements, when I have been nursing since the begin-

ning of the war. But tell me, please, are the carrier pigeons ever used to carry messages of importance? I have heard of their being used and yet it seems almost absurd in a war of such amazing scientific inventions that one should employ such a messenger."

Madame Bonnèt shrugged her shoulders in French fashion.

"Child, this is a war of both little things and great. Nothing is too simple, nothing too wonderful to have its use. I can only hope my birds are of some service; what messages they bear I am, of course, not told. Yet they must be of some value, since the French government has been able to employ all I could furnish them. It is more difficult to train the young birds now. One takes them away from home for a short distance when they are young, then the distance becomes greater, a hundred miles, five hundred, sometimes six hundred. In the Franco-Prussian war, when my beloved city of Paris was besieged, the carrier pigeons kept Paris always in touch with the outside world. That shall not happen again. Paris

will not be besieged, and yet who can say what service my pets may not give?"

Nona held out her hand. "How interesting, Madame Bonnèt! Do you think one of them will come to me?"

Madame Bonnet slipped a grain of corn in Nona's outstretched palm as she stood waiting. She was not in her nurse's uniform, but wore a simple white dress and a moment before had taken off her hat. She looked very young and slender and picturesque in contrast with Madame Bonnèt's size and her mourning.

A particularly lovely gray pigeon with delicate lavender shades of color in her full throat had for several moments been hovering about Nona, coquetting with her.

Now, at her invitation, the pigeon rose and flew off, then returned and for a breathless instant settled in Nona's hand.

Madame Bonnèt reached over and lifted it up.

"My pigeons rarely do that for anyone except my daughter or me. So I mean to name this one for you. Will you tell me your name again? I do not think I heard, there were so many new ones."

Madame Bonnèt was speaking in French, but Nona understood her without difficulty. Madame Bonnèt seemed to be able to understand English, but not to use it fluently.

Nona repeated her name. Then slipping her hand into her pocket she drew out a little purse and opened it.

"I have been carrying around a little gold luck piece someone gave me as a child. May I tie it around my pigeon, so if we ever meet again I may recognize her as my namesake?"

Then Nona felt embarrassed by her own sentimentality. She had thought no one was paying attention to her except Madame Bonnèt, and here were the two young American officers whom they had met upon their railway journey through France, waiting to speak to their hostess. Evidently they had been quartered in Madame Bonnèt's home.

Candidly, Nona did not like Lieutenant Martin and had never liked him in their slight acquaintance as boy and girl.

Yet these repeated meetings with persons whom one does not expect to see again are always taking place.

Madame Bonnèt shook hands with the two young officers. One could see how much they both admired the fine French woman.

"I am told Lieutenant Martin is a wireless expert, so he is probably scornful of my carrier pigeons," Madame Bonnèt said good naturedly. "You see, he represents the newest, while my pigeons represent the oldest method of communication in war. Pigeons were used by the Saracens in the first crusade. Nevertheless, Lieutenant Martin, when you leave for the front, I intend to make you a present of one of my old-fashioned messengers. It would be strange if you should find my gift useful."

To Nona's surprise Lieutenant Martin said quickly:

"Then may I have the pigeon I just overheard you naming for Miss Davis?"

And Madame Bonnèt laughed and agreed.

CHAPTER VII

The Days Before the Great Day

SO the first summer with the American Expeditionary force in France passed swiftly on.

For long hours during the day, and sometimes into the night, the American soldiers were occupied in learning their final lessons in the great war game which had been fought out in Europe for the past three years.

Never did men work with greater energy or enthusiasm, or with more impatience, knowing how greatly the Allies needed their aid and longing to meet the test. The work was grilling and the strain of waiting severest of all. Yet the greater number of the American boys met the situation gallantly. Already the first divisions, who had arrived in the early part of the summer in France, had broken all previous records in military training.

It remains an historical fact that civilization has always moved westward to test democracy, until the United States remained the last country in which the right of human beings to govern themselves could be proved, since there were no countries farther west. Moreover, it appeared again as if in the great war that the United States had come to be the last stronghold. For Europe alone had not been equal to the fight against autocracy. Unless the United States could turn the balance in favor of the Entente Allies, the cause of democracy might be set back many hundreds of years.

This idea was in the mind of almost every American soldier in France, although perhaps not expressed in these words. Yet each man and boy understood that the United States not only expected him to do his duty in the war, but to fulfil his own and his country's ideal.

Yet naturally the life in the American camp in France was by no means all plain sailing. Besides the obstacles one might have reasonably expected, there was one thought which haunted the men and officers alike.

Could it be possible that here in their midst and in spite of every effort there might yet be a traitor?

In all the past we know there has been nothing of the same kind to equal the German spy system. It would seem that after three years of war, after the eternal vigilance of the nations, the last Teuton spy would have been unearthed. Yet they have reminded one of the ancient story of the giant who whenever he was thrown to earth, rose up again the stronger.

Nevertheless, here in the American camp in France a spy could not well be imagined. There were only the soldiers, the French people devoted to their interests, the Red Cross nurses at their hospital. Now and then an occasional outsider came on some business connected with the army and went away again, but always his business and his history were well known.

However, there was always the chance. The enemy would like to hear how many American soldiers had arrived at the permanent camp, how many more were to come later and at what moment they would

enter the great drive with their Allies. It was true that both the French and British plans were being constantly transmitted to Germany before they could be carried out.

Therefore the American soldiers were watchful, sometimes almost suspicious, of one another.

But, beside this serious side of American camp life in France, there was also a cheerful side.

The American soldiers were living among the race of people nearest akin in nature to them. For no amount of adversity can make the French or the Americans anything but valiant and pleasure loving.

Besides their work the American soldiers in France wished also to be amused. If the entertainment of the soldiers in the camps all over the United States was important, this was equally true in France.

Therefore it chanced that the American Red Cross girls, who were stationed at the hospital nearest their own men, were called upon among their first duties to help with other things than nursing.

Of course, if there had been many soldiers ill this would have been impossible. But during the early weeks after the arrival of the American Regulars, there were but few patients in Madame Castaigne's splendidly equipped hospital.

So the nurses were, of course, glad to do whatever was useful. But rather to her old friends' surprise, Barbara Thornton seemed to develop such an intense interest in the amusement of the soldiers that it was difficult to know whether she was making the effort more to entertain herself than them.

However, no one at the present time really understood Barbara Thornton's character. Marriage had changed her as it does most people. And it was not until a number of things had taken place that Barbara began even faintly to understand herself.

Upon her arrival at the hospital, instead of continuing her former intimacy with Eugenia, with Mildred and with Nona, the other three of the four original Red Cross girls, Barbara developed an unexpected

intimacy with Mollie Drew and with Agatha Burton. Yet one could hardly say, truthfully, that Mollie and Barbara were intimate with Agatha. If one watched closely enough it was merely that they appeared to find her useful to them. Neither girl would have agreed to this. However, they had not at first liked her, and something in her quiet, unobtrusive personality must have had its influence.

In spite of the fact that Eugenia, Mildred and Nona were all aware of Barbara's attitude, at the beginning they did not discuss the matter.

Eugenia, who would have been apt to influence the younger girl, had she spoken to her, was only vaguely conscious of what was taking place. For naturally, Eugenia was absorbed in her duties as the superintendent of the new American hospital and wished to be absorbed in them until she had neither time nor strength for anything else. For if Eugenia were intensely occupied she was not so apt to be haunted by the thought of the possible fate of her husband. What could have become of him? There

were many times when Eugenia believed that if she could only hear he were dead, she would be satisfied, even comparatively happy. There were so many other women learning to bear this burden. But the uncertainty was torture.

Nevertheless, Eugenia would not betray herself by revealing her unhappiness, believing that one of the first duties of war nursing is to put one's personal sorrows out of one's mind. Yet now and then a letter arriving from a friend, or from some person in authority who was endeavoring to discover what fate had befallen Captain Castaigne, Eugenia would sometimes be led to hope and then, at other times, to feel an even deeper despair.

So it was small wonder that, so long as Barbara and the other nurses did whatever was needed of them in the hospital and kept well, Eugenia was glad to know they were being helpful and also entertaining the soldiers until the time of their greater service. Certainly she would never have dreamed of feeling concerned over what any one of the original Red Cross girls

might do. Eugenia believed she loved and understood them too completely.

There were other and different reasons why Mildred Thornton would not criticise her sister-in-law. In the first place, Mildred was reserved and not critical and was also occupied with her own experiences. Moreover, the very fact of being a sister-in-law made her too loyal both to Barbara and to Dick to think of resenting Barbara's present behavior.

Therefore it was left to Nona Davis, as the only one of the four old friends to puzzle over and not altogether to approve of one of their original group. But this may have been partly due to the fact that Nona felt a little on the outside and was frequently lonely for Sonya during the first few weeks of this second coming to France to continue her Red Cross nursing.

Yet, whatever defense one might make, or whatever excuse be given, there was little doubt that Barbara was behaving strangely. Nor was it her friendship with Mollie Drew nor with Agatha Burton which excited Nona's unexpressed criticism. Nona

herself had worked with Mollie and Agatha in Italy and had liked them fairly well. It was she who had introduced them to Barbara. But it looked at present as if Barbara Thornton were only using the friendship of the two comparatively unknown girls to further her own plans.

For, the slight acquaintance with young Lieutenant Hugh Kelley, which Barbara had started in idle fashion on board the train bringing them both through France, had apparently developed into a real interest. This was rather extraordinary in view of the fact that Barbara was married to Richard Thornton and was supposedly utterly devoted to him. Moreover, she had a baby and yet was behaving as if she were a girl again.

Sometimes Nona wondered if Barbara had ever explained to Lieutenant Kelley that she was Mrs. Thornton, not Miss Thornton. He had received this impression upon their first meeting and Barbara did appear so absurdly childish. However, it was just as well Nona had never felt at liberty to inquire, for as a matter of fact

Barbara had deliberately continued the false impression, persuading Mollie and Agatha to assist her. At first the misunderstanding had struck her as amusing, later she had concluded that it would do no possible harm to go on with it, as a new friendship would keep her from being so lonely and unhappy over her separation from Dick.

As for Lieutenant Kelley, she really did not consider him, only she knew, of course, he was the type of man who always enjoyed a mild flirtation. And Mollie and Agatha made particularly agreeable friends at present, because they were comparative strangers and therefore would not criticise her, and also because they were interested in two of the American soldiers.

Mollie and Guy Ellis, who had met in such an absurd fashion, had developed a surprising interest in each other for so short an acquaintance. But then these were war times and they were both in a foreign land.

It also turned out that Agatha Burton had a friend among the American soldiers

encamped in the village close to Eugenia's hospital. This may have influenced her coming abroad to nurse, since the friendship, Agatha declared, was an old one. The soldier, whose name was Charles Anderson, was not prepossessing in appearance. He was small and squarely built and had rather a sullen manner. But then Agatha was not the type of girl who would attract many people. She was too quiet and unobtrusive.

However, the three girls discovered another bond. The three young men in whom they were interested were musical.

If Lieutenant Kelley had to preserve discipline as an officer at other times, the three men could meet on a more common ground with their music. Then Mollie Drew had an attractive voice and a gift for singing old Irish ballads which the soldiers especially loved.

And in the long twilights of those first summer evenings in France, music played a more important part in some of the boys' lives than they ever believed possible.

Barbara could not sing, was not musical

in the least, but she did develop an unexpected executive ability, for it was she who arranged the weekly concerts at the little French Casino near the edge of the village.

She also made friends with Berthe Bonnèt, who had been studying at the *Conservatoire* in Paris before the beginning of the war. Now all of Madame Bonnèt's, all of Berthe's time and strength was given to the service of the American soldiers. If Berthe could do for them one thing more, she was happy, while Madame Bonnèt had become *La Mère* to half the American soldiers in her one-time quiet old French village.

Therefore Barbara found many reasons, whenever she was free from her hospital work, for spending many hours in Madame's old garden.

If Nona thought of this as a convenient place for Barbara to see Lieutenant Kelley, who was quartered with Madame, she could not, of course, mention it. Moreover, Barbara seldom left the hospital unless either Agatha or Mollie were with her.

Moreover, Nona's own spare time from

her Red Cross nursing was being given to acting as interpreter. She had a small class of American and French soldiers whom she was teaching to understand each other and found the task extremely amusing.

CHAPTER VIII

Loneliness

ONE afternoon Nona went to Barbara's bedroom, adjoining her own, and knocked.

She had recently decided that she did not intend to allow Barbara to separate herself from her old friendships, if it were possible to prevent it. For, if Barbara were doing something of which she could not altogether approve, then all the more reason why she should hold to her affection in order to influence her should trouble come.

So, as Mildred Thornton was at present in charge of the hospital, Eugenia having gone away on one of the fruitless trips she made now and then in order to seek news of her husband, Nona asked that she and Barbara be given their two hours for recreation at the same time. Then she had managed an engagement with Barbara for a late afternoon walk.

Of course Nona appreciated how difficult it often is to revive an old affection which time and circumstances have altered. Certainly Barbara must have changed since her marriage, grown more spoiled and self-centered. One could scarcely imagine the old Barbara behaving as this new one was doing. Nevertheless, Nona did not intend the separation between the four original Red Cross girls to continue indefinitely.

Since the evening of her own and Barbara's arrival at the hospital and their reunion with Eugenia and Mildred, there had been nothing like the intimacy they had known in the Countess Castaigne's tiny house with the blue front door in southern France. Yet here there should be a deeper emotion between them, now that the Stars and Stripes were to float with the Tricolor over the scarred fields of France.

Barbara did not answer and Nona, turning the handle of the door, walked in.

To her surprise she found that Barbara was not waiting, but that Agatha Burton was in the room glancing over something which she had written upon a pad. It was

rather an amusement to her companions that Agatha, who did not appear particularly clever, had confessed that she intended writing a book upon the war at its close and was keeping notes with this idea in mind.

She flushed now, apparently with annoyance at Nona's intrusion.

"I am awfully sorry. I thought Mrs. Thornton was waiting for me. I did not realize any one else was here," Nona apologized.

Agatha's manner immediately changed. She had a fashion, which few of the girls working with her liked, of now and then behaving in a kind of apologetic way, as if she were accused of something and trying to defend herself, when no one had considered her.

"Oh, it does not matter; I was expecting you. Mrs. Thornton asked me to wait here for a few moments to give you this note. She cannot keep her engagement." Then Agatha slipped hurriedly out of the room.

Barbara had written only a few lines to explain that she had unexpectedly made an

appointment to see one of the superior officers at the American camp. She was to find out if he approved of an entertainment on a good deal larger scale than they had yet undertaken for the amusement of the soldiers.

Nona bit her lips for an instant with disappointment and annoyance. Then she laughed. Barbara was a good deal of a diplomatist, and doubtless the entertainment would take place. Yet it was rather a surprise to find Barbara devoting the greater part of her energies to something so unlike serious Red Cross nursing. Well, that would come later! However, Nona remembered Barbara never had cared for the nursing to the extent she and Eugenia and Mildred had. This was one of the many reasons why she had disapproved of Barbara's returning to France to undertake Red Cross work a second time. However, they were all in France to do whatever was required, and if Barbara's talent and inclination took this particular outlet, she had no right to criticise, so long as Eugenia did not.

However, Nona had no idea of giving up

her walk. She had been in the hospital all day and was tired.

She took the road from the hospital toward the village, where the largest number of the American soldiers were encamped. Yet she did not intend going into the village but merely to keep on the outskirts.

It was late afternoon and the work in camp was, in all probability, over, so that the men would be resting. Yet she wished to be sufficiently near to see the little once sleepy old French town, with its former prosperous neighboring fields, and to dream of the great change which had taken place. For at present it seemed the most strenuous village in the world.

However, Nona had not gone far from the hospital when she heard footsteps following her own. Then a cold nose was thrust into her hand. She allowed her hand to remain affectionately on Duke's great head. He was always lonely and wretched when Eugenia was away, and seemed to know when she left the hospital by the same intuition which had informed him of Captain Castaigne's disappearance. For the

larger part of the time Duke could not be near his mistress in the hospital, yet was content if he felt her not far away.

Nona wondered for a moment if Duke would get into any mischief by going with her. But then he was usually discretion itself and already hundreds of the American soldiers knew and loved him.

Besides, Nona was a little lonely herself and Duke's society would be a consolation. Only this morning she had received a letter from Sonya Valesky, telling her that she and Bianca were away at a quiet seaside resort in New Jersey in order to escape the heat. Sonya also mentioned that Carlo Navara had been spending a few days with them.

The friend who had been paying for Carlo's musical education before his departure to join the army in Italy and his subsequent injury had arranged for Carlo to see the most eminent throat specialist in New York. The specialist had advised an operation. He gave Carlo no certain hope that the operation would give him back his beautiful voice, but there was one chance

in a hundred. The operation was a dangerous one, would he go through with it? So Carlo had come to ask Sonya's advice. She had done so much for him in the past and they were such friends, he would not do what she did not think wise. Sonya added at the last that she had told Carlo to take the one chance, yet Nona could guess from her letter that she was worried over her decision.

And the letter had made Nona a little homesick. Since she had no family of her own, although Sonya was only her friend, she had come to feel closer to her than to anyone else. Besides, she was not reconciled to Sonya's not coming with her to France, but preferring to remain in the United States to chaperon Bianca for the present at least.

But when Sonya had last been in France she had just returned from a Russian prison after having been sentenced to Siberia and then reprieved. So it was small wonder that her memory of those days was not pleasant. Sonya now seemed to love the United States and, in spite of the turmoil in

Russia in her effort for freedom, to be content to remain away from her own country.

But while she was thinking, Nona had turned from the road into a side path which skirted the edge of the village. She was not afraid at being alone. For one thing, Duke was with her; for another, the soldiers had so far been universally courteous. One of General Pershing's first requests to the American soldiers arriving in France was that they show entire respect to French women. They would surely not show less to American girls.

Running through the village which had been given over by France for the training grounds of the American soldiers, was a little river, which in this country would be thought of only as a stream. Here it curved and wound round to the left. Nona could see the lights and shadows on the water through the trees which separated her from it.

She believed the woods empty, then she thought for an instant that she saw the flutter of a woman's dress going swiftly past in the opposite direction. There was

something oddly familiar about the figure, and yet, disappearing so swiftly, Nona not only did not recognize who it was, but was scarcely convinced she had seen anyone.

At some little distance further on, however, she did discover an American soldier half sitting and half lying down under one of the trees. He was smoking, yet Nona recognized what his attitude of discouragement revealed. She had been doing war work too long not to know! Moreover, in these past few weeks she had been a witness to deeper if more self-contained homesickness than she had ever seen. But then no other soldiers have been forced to fight so far from their own people.

Nona wondered for an instant if there were anything she could do to help, just to talk to another human being is often a consolation.

But while she was hesitating the young man glanced in her direction. Then, jumping up, Lieutenant Kelley came toward her and Nona wondered for the shadow of a second how long he had been alone.

"Sorry to have you catch me loafing,

Miss Davis! I confess I am in a bad humor and trying to fight it off. An officer hasn't any right to be homesick or have the blues; one must leave that privilege to a private, as he is still a human being. My, but it is good to see you standing there in that white gown with that great dog! It makes a fellow feel as if he were back in Kentucky, meeting unexpectedly some girl he likes in a country lane. The country about here isn't so unlike Kentucky."

Lieutenant Kelley was now near Nona, leaning over a little fence which divided the woods from the path.

Nona smiled. Lieutenant Kelley was just a charming, well-bred boy; it was small wonder Barbara liked and enjoyed him. Only Nona wondered a little if Barbara were making the young man more contented or less so.

"Do you think you ought to walk about like this alone?" he inquired. "You see, most of our soldiers are well behaved, but there are a whole lot of us and you cannot expect us all to be alike. Lieutenant

Martin and I were out together a few hours ago trying to round up a few fellows who have fallen from grace. I'm not much on discipline, I'm too easy; but Martin is a great fellow for discipline. I must say, though, he is equally hard on himself; but then he thinks and dreams of nothing but this war, does not seem to have another wish, not even an affection outside of it. Do you mind my confiding in you? He has just been raking me over the coals for what he says is my too great familiarity with the men. But you see, I thought we were fighting to make the world safe for democracy and I've an idea the men will do as much for me as for him. Martin is not popular; I worry over the fact sometimes since he really is a fine fellow once you know him. But at present he is worked up over the idea that there may even be spies here among our own men, has had some such suggestion made to him from those higher up. So he keeps on the lookout and if the soldiers find out he is watching them they won't like it.

To me the idea of a traitor in our own

camp is incredible, but this whole German spy business always has been. I don't know whether I ought to speak of this even to you."

Nona shook her head. "No, I suppose not, although it is the thing we all think about, even if we do not speak of it. To have the Germans find where our camp is, or how many men we have over here, or when the great moment of real work comes, these things must never happen! Yet I agree with you I simply cannot believe there is anyone who would, or who could betray us for that matter. But I won't walk far and I am not alone." Nona still held her hand on Duke's silver gray head, the dog quiet as the proverbial sentinel.

"Wish I could go along with you," Lieutenant Kelley answered. "But I must be back in camp as I've important work to do before taps."

Then, vaulting over the fence, he went on toward camp.

After their conversation Nona naturally thought nothing more of his having had a companion with him before she came on the

scene. There was nothing in what he had said to indicate it and nothing in his appearance or manner to suggest deception. Besides, why should he have wished to deceive her?

She did think, however, of what he had said and of how universal this fear he had expressed had become. The whole world seemed obsessed by it. In almost every one of her Red Cross experiences, since the present war began, Nona had come in contact either with the actual business of spying, or with the suspicion of it. Here in France, guarded as they all were, they must be safe. Nona was sorry that the idea had again been presented to her. She hoped never to be brought into touch with anything or person connected with the business of spying again. For one thing, their recent Italian experience with Nannina was too fresh in her mind. No news had, so far, been heard of what had become of the Italian woman.

Naturally, Nona walked on farther than she realized, thinking of these things.

Then somewhat sharply she suddenly

came upon some barbed wire entanglements, making further progress impossible.

Evidently this portion of the French countryside had been used by the American soldiers for learning to construct these entrenchments. Nona knew that this was one of the tasks they had been working upon as a part of their intensive military training in these past few weeks in France. For modern wire entanglements of the same character had never been used before in any war.

Leaning over, intensely interested, Nona began studying the intricate twisting and weaving in and out of the heavy wires.

The next instant, however, she jumped up both surprised and frightened, for not many feet away a man was kneeling on the ground making a more careful study of the entanglements than her own had been and he was not in the uniform of a soldier.

CHAPTER IX

A Dispute

"I AM not a German spy," the young man announced, half resentfully and half in a tone of amusement, as he rose up from the ground and faced Nona Davis.

"Yes, of course you thought I was one for the moment. Everybody is obsessed with this same idea out here and are all on the lookout, but I happen to be an American newspaper writer. If you would like to see my credentials I carry them about with me, because I grant you my behavior may now and then appear suspicious."

Rather to Nona's chagrin her unknown companion was openly laughing over her confusion at his immediate interpretation of her first impression.

He was a tall, slender fellow, not a bit good looking, with a thin face, a large nose and humorous eyes. Yet he had a fine

mouth with strong white teeth, which Nona immediately noticed as he laughed at her.

"You see, I have been in Europe, in one country and another, almost ever since this war began and I have seen a lot of this barbed wire work, so I was interested to find out how well our American boys were learning the business. They have done a good job. I beg your pardon, but do you think it particularly safe for you to be walking alone in this neighborhood at this hour? If you don't mind I'll walk along back to the hospital with you."

With apparent gravity Nona stood listening to her latest acquaintance. Now that she saw him more distinctly, he was so absolutely of the type one would expect him to be that it was scarcely necessary that he should present his literary credentials.

"This is the second time in the last quarter of an hour that this same warning about walking alone has been given me," Nona answered, trying to appear demure, but in reality rather surprised at the unexpected feeling of friendliness, which this brief conversation with an entire stranger had inspired in her.

It is curious how frequently a man's profession affects his appearance.

The young man before Nona had a slight stoop to his shoulders, or else it was only that his head was thrust the slighest bit forward, as though his ideas went always a little beyond the movement of his body. Then his eyes were keen as well as humorous and his forehead broad and intellectual.

"You are very kind," Nona returned, "but really I am not in the least nervous and I—"

"You don't know me, do you? And I may be more dangerous than anybody or anything you might meet along the way. Was that what you were about to say? I don't believe I had thought of that. Of course I recognize you as one of the nurses at the American hospital, which Madame Castaigne has in charge. I know her, or at least I know her slightly. She is rather splendid, isn't she? As a matter of fact, the American newspaper correspondents have had a château turned over to their use not far from the American camp. Just at present I am sending a little story of our Expedi-

tionary Force back to the papers each day. It is rather difficult writing, since we are not allowed to tell anything that is worth while."

Nona was hardly aware that she and her companion had, by this time, turned and were walking along side by side in the direction from which she had just come. She had certainly never given her consent to being accompanied by him, although neither had she refused it.

But she was entertained. It might be disloyalty and one would never confess it aloud, but Nona was interested to talk occasionally to some man who was not a soldier. It was not that military men were not interesting, but merely that one enjoyed variety. She could scarcely imagine a soldier with the unfortunate stoop this young man had, nor with his unconventional manner.

Yet, almost instantly, Nona had felt that she liked him, although she did not ordinarily enjoy too great unconventionality. This was probably due to her southern rearing.

However, she decided immediately that it would be of interest to hear a number of things her present companion must know. After having seen so many different phases of the war, if he were clever, he must give one a broader outlook on the entire subject.

Then Nona suddenly remembered that before she began trying to acquire outside information it might be just as well for her to find out her companion's name. Yet she did not like deliberately to ask him.

"I wonder if you would mind telling me your name?" an agreeable masculine voice inquired at this instant. "Even if I do know that you are one of the American Red Cross nurses it is extremely important to me to hear which one."

Nona flushed slightly, although biting her lips to hide a faint smile. After all, was it agreeable to have all of one's thoughts anticipated before one was able to speak?

However, Nona gave her name; there was really nothing else to do. But since her companion did not volunteer his in return, she had a little streak of obstinacy which made her determined not to inquire.

He evidently intended that she, also, should show sufficient interest to ask. And why, after all, should she wish to know?

Nevertheless, as they continued their walk, Nona began to be glad that Barbara had failed her. She was finding the afternoon more amusing than she had anticipated.

It was an exquisite summer day and the French landscape held a peculiar softness and beauty of form and color.

Perhaps it is well for us to recall now and then that nature has gone on with her same unchanging seasons of spring, summer, fall and winter for these past three years, when human nature has suffered such strange transformation. So Nona was glad to enjoy the landscape and her new acquaintance and to forget everything else for a little while.

She did not talk very much, just answered sympathetically. But she realized she was smiling more often than usual.

However, she did not observe that her companion kept his eyes upon her whenever it was possible without staring, and that he

not only did not seem interested, he seemed hardly conscious of the charm of the French country.

Nona had on the same white dress she had worn at Madame Bonnèt's. When she was not at work she did not often go out of the hospital in her nurse's uniform. This dress was cooler than most things she owned, and although perfectly simple, since Sonya had it made for her, it held the distinction which Sonya knew how to give to all clothes.

Nona looked frail and there was an added charm in her face. For the past three years she had seen so much heroism and so much suffering. Since she was fine and sensitive, the impressions were deeply implanted within her heart and mind. Then, although she had never spoken of the subject often, her own experience in Italy and Eugino Zoli's gallant death had also left their impression. Whether she had cared for Eugino or not, at least Nona had determined that she would keep herself free from any such emotion again. Sonya would probably never marry and they would have each other.

Nona was listening and thinking at the same time, as only girls and women can do, when she and her companion came to an abrupt pause.

It was not quite dusk and one should have been able to distinguish faces.

Yet the figure before them had cried "halt" in a peremptory tone, and, at the same instant, Nona found herself gazing more closely into the mouth of a pistol than at any moment in her war nursing adventures. She also heard the young man with her mutter something under his breath which is not supposed to be polite, but which really equally expressed her own point of view for the moment.

"Who goes there?" a voice demanded with unnecessary sternness, for since she had been able to recognize Lieutenant Martin, there seemed no especial reason why he should not also recognize her.

"Miss Davis, one of the Red Cross nurses at the American hospital, and Philip Dawson. I wonder if you recall me? Yes, I understand we should not be so near camp after dusk, but it is not yet dark and

I am seeing Miss Davis back to the hospital as quickly as we can manage."

Nona felt annoyed. It seemed to her to be characteristic of Lieutenant Martin to try to make a display of his authority. She did not believe that she was breaking any of the rules of the encampment by merely walking on the outskirts of the village at this hour. He had a disagreeable reputation for unnecessary harshness among his own men, but there was no possible excuse for his making an exhibition of it before her. Nona wished she could think of something to say which might express her attitude.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Davis," Lieutenant Martin volunteered before she could speak. "I am afraid I did not look closely at either you or Dawson. I have been out searching for some of our men who have been giving trouble. One of them is still missing. Nevertheless, it is against orders to be in the neighborhood of camp after dark without a permit. I'll see you home."

Lieutenant Martin placed himself on Nona's right, as if he deliberately ignored the fact that she was not alone. Yet the

road was narrow and it was self-evident that there was some one on her left.

Nona did not know just what to say or do and then decided to allow the two men to meet the situation, as she was perfectly capable of returning home without the escort of either of them. But since they were both bent upon rescuing her from no possible danger, it was simpler not to dispute the question.

Moreover, almost immediately after Lieutenant Martin's speech, she heard the other man laugh.

"See here, Lieutenant Martin, I know I have to yield to you in military matters and since I am not a soldier you probably do not think much of me. Nevertheless, you know I believe I am capable of getting Miss Davis safely back home, even of defending her, if anything should happen in this next half mile. And after all, I secured the privilege first."

Lieutenant Martin did not laugh. If he had a sense of humor, it was not in evidence. Yet Nona was surprised by his offer to accompany her. She knew he disliked

feminine society so intensely, and although he would have done his duty had he felt she *required* his escort, it was hardly necessary for him to volunteer under the present circumstances.

"You are not armed. I prefer to see Miss Davis back to the hospital."

Then Nona walked on between the two men, not knowing whether to laugh or to be annoyed and finding it difficult to make any kind of conversation which should include the three of them, since both men refused to speak again.

In sight of the hospital Lieutenant Martin said good-bye without ceremony and walked off toward camp. Nona could not help thinking that he was rather better looking than he was agreeable, as she watched his fine upright figure and the splendid military carriage of his shoulders and head.

She did try to thank him, but he seemed bored by her efforts.

The next moment she and her more recent acquaintance had reached the gate of the hospital.

Above the gate hung the French and American flags, the one crossed over the other.

As a matter of course, Philip Dawson lifted his hat.

"I would like to come to see you if I may, Miss Davis, and it is not an infringement of hospital rules," he asked straight forwardly. "But if I cannot, and at any time or in any way I can be of service to you, you must give me the privilege. Strange things are taking place about us these days and one never knows when something of an unexpected kind may develop."

Nona shook hands, then rather idly watched the second of her companions walk away. The two men formed an amusing contrast.

CHAPTER X

The Two Sides of a Shield

BUT curiously enough it was not Philip Dawson whom Nona was to see soon again and see very frequently, but Lieutenant Martin.

However, she saw him not in a social fashion, but as a very ill patient at the American hospital.

His disaster, which was partly an accident and partly through intention, was never openly discussed. Indeed, the facts were kept from the knowledge of as many persons as possible, except those who were obliged to know and others to whom the circumstances had to be reported.

Naturally, no one in authority wished anything except fair news to be sent abroad from the American headquarters of the army in France, and there was enough of gallantry and skill and steadfastness to be reported. Like a great family, it was wiser,

perhaps, to conceal one's family's shortcomings.

Yet never is there a large number of human beings together without some difficulties! One evening Lieutenant Martin and Lieutenant Kelley were having a short walk after dark. Taps had been sounded some time before and the men were supposed to be in their quarters, except for those who had special permits such as the two young officers.

They were walking along a fairly open road only a few miles from their own village, but bordered with a number of old trees on either side. By chance, as he explained afterwards, Hugh Kelley had dropped behind for a few moments when he was surprised by the report of a pistol. Running on ahead he discovered that his former companion had apparently stumbled and fallen and that his own weapon had shot him in the left arm.

Yet Martin was unconscious and in lifting him the younger man found he had been struck in the back of the head. Not far away was a stone which must have been

thrown at him from some one in hiding, and as the blow caused him to fall forward, his own pistol had exploded.

Lieutenant Kelley said later that he had looked for a moment, but could find no other human being in their neighborhood. Then he concluded that the thing of first importance was to secure aid for his friend and afterwards to play detective.

He had therefore brought Lieutenant Martin directly to the American hospital, which happened to be closer to them than the village. There, Madame Castaigne had herself received him and he had left his injured friend and officer in her charge.

The doctor at first reported that neither of the young officer's wounds was particularly serious and that it was only a question of a few weeks before Martin's recovery. But the young man was found to be overworked and overstrained, with his vitality lower than anyone could have imagined from his appearance. So the few weeks had already passed.

Late one afternoon Nona came quietly into Lieutenant Martin's room, a private

room, as the hospital was still uncrowded and he had been found to be an exceptionally nervous patient.

Nona had been off duty all day and as she had passed the other nurse, Agatha Burton, in the hall the moment before, she discovered him alone.

The young man was propped up on pillows, with the bandage still about his head and his arm in a sling. Yet somehow Nona did not feel that either of these misfortunes warranted the expression she observed on his face.

He had rather a thin face always and now the skin was drawn tightly over his fine, slightly arched nose and the prominent bones of his cheeks. His gray eyes, which looked darker since his illness, were sunken and his hair pushed carelessly back showed the best of him, a high, pure forehead, unlined and white as a girl's. Yet he seemed wretched and miserable and Nona heard his sigh deepen into a groan as she came nearer his bed.

"I don't see how you could have left me alone so long suffering like this. It's been, oh, it's been hades!"

"You are not worse, are you?" Nona asked, "and you can't have been alone long, because I saw Miss Burton just leaving your room and Madame Castaigne told me she had seen you a short time ago." Lieutenant Martin made no answer, while Nona adjusted his pillow and then moved to open a blind so that he could see the yellow lights of the sun casting the last of the day's glory over the nearby valley of France.

"I thought nurses were not supposed to argue with patients," Lieutenant Martin murmured irritably and then in a little different tone, "But thank you for raising that shade without asking me if I wished it. The sunrise and the sunset are about all the beauty I ever see these days, except—the truth is that Miss Burton has asked me so many questions in the last few hours that if she had not gone just when she did there would have been another outburst. And did Madame Castaigne tell you that she scolded me as if I had been about six years old and without the least regard for my being a First Lieutenant, with a fair chance

of a captaincy, until this blasted accident? She assured me that if I was not more considerate of the nurses—well, I suppose I was not to be allowed to have one, I was not quite certain what my punishment was to be. But that same Miss Burton seems to have shed tears over something she thinks I said to her. But I am sure I have never been inconsiderate, although I don't like Miss Burton. She gives me the creeps; for one thing, she won't fight back. I have never been disagreeable to you, Miss Davis."

Nona laughed. "How are the mighty fallen!" she thought a trifle wickedly to herself. But aloud she answered. "Oh, not especially; besides, I don't pay any attention to what men say when they are ill. They are scarcely responsible. Besides, your illness must have been particularly hard on you, shut up all these weeks with women and girls when all your interest and thought are with our soldiers. Even though we did not know each other very well when we were younger, I remember you had the reputation of being immensely scornful of girls."

Lieutenant Martin colored unexpectedly.

"I call that hitting below the belt and when a man is down, Miss Davis, and I thought you were a good sport."

Nona held up both her slender hands bare of any rings.

"Hands up, I apologize." Then she came and leaned over the bed.

"But you are better, or at least you do not seem to be suffering from anything except personal grievances. Is there anything I can do for you before dinner?"

"Sit down and talk to me, if you will."

Without discussion Nona drew up a low chair and sat down.

In spite of the fact that he had been generally acknowledged as an extremely disagreeable and ungrateful patient, Nona had really come to like Lieutenant Jack Martin rather unusually well. Of course this was partly due to the fact that however slight their acquaintance in the past, at least this and the knowledge of common friends was a bond between them. Besides, Lieutenant Martin's bad tempers were merely those of an undisciplined boy, and

this was amusing in view of the fact that he was so stern a disciplinarian both with himself and with the men in camp. But Nona had not taken three years of experience in nursing to find out how different a man may be in illness and in health.

The young man's expression had changed again in the last moment, however.

"I suppose I am a pretty bad sort," he said quietly, "or at least I give people that impression, which amounts to the same thing. This accident, for instance, would never have happened if I had not a genius for making enemies. But I can't guess what fellow hates me sufficiently to wish to get rid of me at least temporarily; and I don't want to find out. I wish I could persuade our Colonel and Kelley and some of the other men just to let the whole business drop. I would rather have gone out altogether than have a scandal in our unit."

Nona shook her head almost subconsciously. Lieutenant Martin was too fine a soldier, there was too much work for him to do for this to happen.

When he turned his head away and said nothing more for a few moments, Nona leaned over and laid her hand lightly on the young officer's. They were strong rather beautiful hands with breadth and yet with long, sensitive fingers.

"I would not think of this any more if I were you, not until you are entirely well. I agree with you, perhaps it may be just as wise not to make too much effort to find out the coward, unless he may be dangerous to you or to someone else at another time. Sooner or later he must reveal himself, and——"

"And I don't count a great deal, do I? Well, I can't say I enjoy your agreeing with me in this," Jack Martin answered, frowning and drawing away slightly from Nona's kindly gesture.

This time Nona did flush and, for the first time, betrayed temper.

"You know I did not mean that and you do make an effort to be disagreeable," she returned.

This time her patient laughed.

"Perhaps I did this time, but somehow

you are just a little too cool, Miss Davis; I would say too good, if I did not fear it would make you angry with me. And I don't want you to be angry. I want you to do me a favor instead. I am better now and I won't be so much trouble, so won't you ask Madame Castaigne if you can take charge of me altogether both the day and night work? You could rest in between times and I promise you that from that moment I shall change from a lion into a lamb."

"I am afraid Madame Castaigne——"

"Oh, please don't give that excuse. I grow tired of hearing Madame Castaigne's name. Of course I understand you can't accept such a task. Please forget I asked you. The truth is, Nona—Miss Davis—I wish you could make up your mind to bear with me for longer than just this time of nursing. I know I only look like half a man with the other half in bandages, and I may be a boor and a bully, but you see I have never had a single woman's affection in my life——"

Nona was by this time standing up looking very grave and angry.

The yellow light through the window flooded her white nurse's dress to the color of her hair.

She was like a slender yellow lily, as cold and as remote, such as Jack Martin remembered growing in certain aristocratic gardens he had seen in the South.

"I am your nurse, Lieutenant Martin, if you wish me to continue to care for you, please never say anything of that character again, else you make my work impossible."

Then to Nona's intense relief she heard someone at the door with her patient's dinner.

This was not her first experience of this kind. Men who are convalescing are apt to make love to their nurses from a combination of sentimentality and gratitude. But for some reason Nona felt especially annoyed and surprised.

Yet she did not observe Lieutenant Jack Martin's jaw set, nor his gray eyes flash as he said softly to himself,

"But I shall not always be your patient, my lady."

CHAPTER XI

The Undertow

NONA'S absorption in her work of nursing Lieutenant Martin had naturally separated her from any complete knowledge of what was taking place outside the hospital during the time.

In a half-way fashion she was aware that Barbara Thornton was spending a good many hours away from her nursing duties and was tremendously interested in the entertainment for the American soldiers which she had in charge.

Mildred Thornton spoke of this once or twice to Nona, saying that she hoped Barbara would not over-fatigue herself, as she seemed to be a little nervous and restless. But of course Barbara had not been working for some time and had gotten out of the discipline. Mildred even discussed writing her brother Dick to come to see Barbara for a short visit if it were possible.

Then she changed her mind in regard to this, knowing that Dick was doing ambulance work in a part of France where at this time his services were most necessary.

Moreover, Barbara had insisted, not once, but half a dozen times, that no matter what happened, she would not interfere with her husband's work. She had promised him this and had promised herself.

Besides, Barbara was slightly irritated by her sister-in-law's suggestion that she was not perfectly herself. In fact, she had never been more interested in anything in her life than her present occupation. The entertainment which she was engineering was to be the most successful one any soldiers' camp had ever enjoyed.

Nona also asked Mildred as a special favor that she would not mention to Eugenia any nervousness she might feel concerning her, as Eugenia had given her consent to the entertainment and Barbara did not wish it withdrawn.

Barbara had been in correspondence with a number of prominent persons in Paris, and a distinguished French actress, Madame

Renane, had promised to come all the way to camp to give a recitation for the American soldiers. Madame Renane was to remain over night at the hospital as Madame Castaigne's guest.

Berthe Bonnèt was also to recite. Berthe had known Madame Renane in Paris and was anxious to have the great lady become interested in her ability.

Then Lieutenant Kelley had been permitted to waive his dignity as an officer sufficiently to assist in the training of a fine chorus of the American soldiers. Two or three of the men were found to be professional singers and were to take part.

At one moment Mollie Drew solemnly agreed that she would sing the few old Irish ballads which had entertained the soldiers on less important occasions, yet the next she was apt to say that no power upon earth could induce her to appear.

So, Barbara was apparently going through the trials which beset the theatrical manager before an important production and had at least this reason for her nervousness. Moreover, what she was pleased to call

rehearsals took a great deal of time and strength. As these rehearsals could only be held in the evenings, Barbara had finally managed to persuade Mildred Thornton, whenever she was free, to play the accompaniments for a number of the singers, as Mildred was an exceptionally well trained pianist.

She had also induced Eugenia to purchase a piano, insisting that nothing would give greater and more innocent pleasure to the American soldiers in their vicinity.

So, Barbara could scarcely be accused of idleness, even if she had altered the nature of her Red Cross duties. Nor was there a girl in the hospital, excepting Nona Davis, perhaps, who did not, in a small measure, share in Barbara's plans.

Eugenia thought of this fact one day, as she observed Nona going through the hall on her way to Lieutenant Martin's room.

Madame Castaigne would not have felt it loyalty to discuss the matter with herself, but in a way Nona Davis was her present favorite among the original group of Red Cross girls. She was devoted to Mildred

Thornton and had seen more of her than of Nona or Barbara. But Mildred was undemonstrative, and her deep affections were given to her own family and to the Russian General to whom she had become engaged during her fine work as a war nurse in Russia.

At one time Eugenia may have considered that she was especially attached to Barbara. But although she was not supposed to have noticed, she, too, had seen that Barbara Thornton had changed since her marriage and not for the better. Yet there must be some hidden reason for Barbara's present restlessness. Eugenia hoped that her work outside the hospital might be an outlet and that she would buckle down to more serious work later, else her coming abroad for the Red Cross was a decided mistake.

But now Eugenia decided that Nona looked a little tired and wondered if more work was being put upon her than the other nurses. She did not wish this. Lieutenant Martin had been a trying patient, not because he had been so ill, but because his nerves had been so overstrained by the

severe demands he made upon himself in camp.

However, he was growing better and Eugenia had several times thought of removing Nona from the case. Yet Lieutenant Martin had begged so hard, had promised such impossible improvement and reformation that she had been turned aside.

Moreover, Eugenia liked the young officer with his stern sense of duty, his strong will and high temper. With these traits of character there were other far more appealing ones, and he was one of the finest types of a soldier. Besides, Eugenia was amused by Nona's present softening influence upon him. Eugenia knew she could reduce him to whatever terms she desired by threatening to change his nurse.

So she said nothing to Nona at the moment of seeing her in the hall, only smiled at her in a fashion which had the most surprising influence upon the people working under her. Eugenia's approval seemed to make all the cogs in the wheel run smoother.

Madame Castaigne was on her way to a

small room which was reserved as a kind of reception room at the front of the hospital. Someone had sent up a card asking to see her and she always saw people when this did not interfere with her work.

Ten minutes later she stopped by Lieutenant Martin's room and after knocking Nona admitted her.

Nona was now on duty a part of each day, as her patient did not require a special night nurse.

The room looked very clean and comfortable, with its white bed and white walls, and some few photographs which Nona had discovered and placed around. And the patient appeared extremely cheerful and handsome.

The bandage had been removed from his head and Eugenia thought she had seldom seen anyone reveal breeding more distinctly.

He and Nona had been laughing over something the moment before she entered and Lieutenant Jack Martin's gray eyes were still so filled with amusement, his whole expression had changed.

"Miss Davis is a great bully. You would

not guess it from looking at her, would you, Madame Castaigne?"

Eugenia shook her head. "Well, if she is I am just coming to relieve you of her—oh, only for a little while."

And Eugenia's sudden understanding made the young man flush.

"Nona, someone named Philip Dawson has just been seeing me and says he knows you and if you are free, will you take a walk with him? I told him I rather thought it might do you good to get out of doors more. He is waiting for your answer."

Nona hesitated an instant.

"You don't mean that fellow Dawson has presumed to come here to the hospital to call upon you?" a masculine voice growled.

"Do you know anything against Mr. Dawson, Lieutenant Martin?" Eugenia inquired. "I was under the impression that he was one of the most brilliant of the newspaper men who are to follow the fortunes of our American army in France. I believe also the correspondents are to be accredited as officers without special rank. But is there anything that is personal?"

Lieutenant Martin looked very much as if he wished to answer "yes;" nevertheless he shook his head.

"No, it is simply that I don't like him. I presume he is clever enough. But if Miss Davis does not mind, I am not sufficiently well for her to leave me this afternoon. Tomorrow perhaps—"

"Nonsense, Lieutenant," Eugenia laughed. "I'll see that you are not neglected. Go on, Nona dear, and decide when you talk with Mr. Dawson. I found him very agreeable. He is in the reception room."

More than an hour later Nona and Philip Dawson sat down in an orchard several miles from the American hospital. They were under one of many peach trees now covered with ripening fruit, as it was late summer.

"I am glad you have liked our walk, Miss Davis. Yes, I have explored this French countryside for many miles. Is it not splendid, whenever there has been the least chance, the French have gone on cultivating their orchards and gardens with their

wonderful, patient thrift? I am going to find you some fruit, then, later, when you have rested, perhaps you will walk up with me to the little French farmhouse over there, as I should rather pay for it. The French people will probably refuse, so you must help me. But one never knows how many people they may be trying to support from one of these small farms."

Nona allowed Philip Dawson to sacrifice his handkerchief and to peel her a great number of peaches which she ate with the deepest satisfaction.

She had just had a charming afternoon. Her companion had been gay and agreeable and had told her many interesting facts. Unlike the greater number of the members of his profession, he seemed to have but little personal vanity and seldom figured as the hero of his own stories.

She had been right, during their one brief former meeting, in thinking she would like him. She had already forgotten any peculiarities in his personal appearance. His hat was on the ground at this moment and his high forehead and humorous eyes, his fine

mouth, made his face too interesting to be ugly.

"Do you know I have been envying Lieutenant Martin recently, Miss Davis? I have been to the hospital to find you several times since my first walk with you, but always before you and Madame Castaigne have been too busy to see me."

"Then you have heard about Lieutenant Martin?" Nona answered. "I thought the matter had been hushed up. But he should hear you say you were envious of him. Of all the impatient, bored invalids I have ever nursed, he is almost the worst. But I *am* sorry for him. He is not interested in anything apparently except his soldiering, and is so afraid the men in his unit will be ordered into the trenches before he is able to join them."

Philip Dawson took out a cigarette.

"Do you mind my smoking?" he queried. Then, when Nona shook her head, he went on:

"Yes, I heard about Martin soon after the trouble. The truth is, I have been quietly trying to find out the reason for the

difficulty ever since it occurred. You see, newspaper men often do a kind of detective work, since they have rather exceptional opportunities for investigating and are a kind of unofficial intelligence bureau, and we have all the same mania these days."

Philip Dawson smoked a moment or two in silence.

"Miss Davis, I wonder if I should tell you something disagreeable. I hate dreadfully to make you uncomfortable and yet, perhaps, it is just as well for you to be on your guard. You may be able to help."

"Please don't talk in riddles," Nona returned with some irritation. "Besides, I wish you would not spoil our afternoon."

Philip Dawson smiled.

"It may not be so bad as that. The truth is, I suppose you may have guessed this yourself. Most of us who are interested in finding out who is responsible for the injury to Lieutenant Martin, believe the man who struck him had a personal reason for getting Martin away from camp for a certain length of time. So far we don't know the man and we don't know the rea-

son. It may have been personal spite or it may have been due to his great diligence in investigating the German spy menace. There are two or three of our own men under suspicion, yet so far there is nothing sufficiently definite for any accusation. It is abominable, isn't it?"

Nona nodded sympathetically.

"Yes, it does spoil my afternoon in a way to have to think there may be traitors in our own American camp. But I really don't see why I should be on my guard, or what I can do to help, except perhaps to warn Lieutenant Martin, and he hates to discuss the subject, says he prefers anything to a scandal in camp. Besides, I am not the proper person to talk of it."

"No," Philip Dawson agreed. "When Martin is well enough his superior officer will discuss the situation with him. Martin is one of the favorite officers of the Colonel of his regiment. But the truth is, I might as well tell you frankly, one of the suspicions is that there is a woman who is also concerned in the trouble. As I said before, the information is far too uncertain to take

seriously, yet there is just one chance in a hundred she may be someone whom you know."

"Someone whom I know," Nona repeated rather stupidly. "But that is out of the question. I only know the dozen or more nurses who are at our American hospital, and Madame Bonnèt and Berthe. I have met no one else since I came to France this time, and I don't see why I should so often be involved in suspicions of this kind. Please let us go on back."

Philip Dawson got up instantly. He was one of the agreeable persons who did not dispute small matters.

"Just as you like, only come first to the little French farmhouse. You may find it sufficiently interesting to forgive my being annoying."

CHAPTER XII

The Casino

THE soldiers had brought in small branches of trees and whatever wild flowers they could find in the countryside. The wild asters were in bloom and a few cornflowers and some wild trillium, so that the bouquets were of tricolor.

At the back of the stage in the Casino hung two great flags, one the French, the other the United States. The flags were the property of the American hospital, but Eugenia had loaned them to Barbara, under the promise that they were to be treated with especial care.

The chief decoration, however, hung suspended above the front of the stage. This was a great wreath made from leaves as nearly like the laurel as could be found and tied with two great bows of ribbon, the one showing the design of the French, the other the design of the American flag.

This wreath and another smaller one, which was at present not on display, represented many hours of work by the Red Cross nurses at Eugenia's hospital. But the wreaths had been Barbara's idea. Indeed, she had revealed herself as a fairly good general in the amount of work and enthusiasm she had inspired other people into exhibiting toward making her entertainment for the American soldiers an unusual success. The paramount difficulty was that the Casino could hold only a limited audience and that the entire camp of American soldiers would have liked to have been present, as well as the adjoining French camp.

But at least Barbara understood some of the rules of the game, for she had left the selection of the audience entirely to the discretion of the officers at camp, only reserving the privilege of inviting Madame Castaigne and the staff of nurses and physicians at her own American hospital.

However, Madame Renane was Eugenia's guest and, in a measure, the guest of the American hospital staff, and as

Barbara was one of their Red Cross nurses, it was natural they should feel a kind of proprietary interest in the occasion.

The patients at the hospital, who were sufficiently convalescent, were also invited. Among them was Lieutenant Martin, who asked Nona Davis as a special favor if she would go with him and sit next him during the performance.

As a matter of fact, Nona would greatly have preferred accompanying Madame Castaigne and Mildred Thornton. Madame Renane was to be with them and remain with them until her part of the program, and Nona would have enjoyed the opportunity of knowing the great French woman more intimately. Nevertheless, she did not feel that she could refuse Lieutenant Martin, as he was still her patient and had not been out of doors except to walk for a few yards at a time.

So as to secure their places before the crowd of soldiers appeared, he and Nona started a little earlier than the others. On their way to the Casino, Nona became the more convinced that she might not have

so agreeable an evening. For, however much he might be trying to conceal the fact, Lieutenant Martin was again not in a specially amiable humor, although recently he had been showing more self-control. Neither was he in sympathy with the prospect ahead of them.

"Seems utter nonsense to me, Miss Davis, this business of coddling soldiers and keeping them amused as if they were children who needed toys. Surely there is work enough to keep everybody occupied and we should all be tired enough to wish to go to bed when work is over."

Nona shook her head.

"Nonsense, Lieutenant. I hoped you intended to reform since your illness and become a more popular officer. I had a talk with your Colonel and, although he seems to like you pretty well, I am convinced he believes your stern views are simply due to the fact that you are so young and have had so little experience of life. The Colonel is a dear himself; I nearly fell in love with him. Pretty soon you will be going back to work, so please

promise me to remember that you yourself have not always been so averse to being amused, even to being coddled during these past weeks."

And Nona laughed with a faint suggestion of teasing.

She liked Lieutenant Martin, but he was too narrow and too self-assured, requiring to be snubbed now and then, and Nona had the subtle knowledge, which most girls and women do have, that he would accept occasional discipline from her rather better than from anyone else.

She saw him flush a little now at her speech.

It was still not dark and they were walking slowly.

"Oh, well, I have been ill and a man is unlike himself when he is ill," he answered, trying not to display temper. But Nona did make him angry, perhaps oftener than she knew, although she was every once in a while aware of it. But Nona's coolness, her little air of aloofness after doing her full and complete duty as a nurse, would have annoyed any man, who chanced to believe he was falling in love with his nurse.

However, Lieutenant Martin meant to go slowly and circumspectly, being determined in the end to have his way. He had not forgotten Nona's attitude toward him, nor her words, when he had once or twice ventured too far in his revelations.

"Patients who are convalescing always think they are in love with their nurses. Please spare me the illusion," was a never-to-be-forgotten reply.

"I will try to make the men in camp like me better if it is possible, when I return," he answered. "It is not agreeable, is it, to be unpopular? But then you have never known that misfortune," Lieutenant Martin continued, with such humility and good humor that it was Nona who felt reproached.

"You have read 'Vanity Fair,' of course, Miss Davis. Funny, I keep thinking of certain portions of it tonight! That is because my mind is ever upon this war! But do you remember when Amelia and George Osborne and Dobbin and Becky and Sir Rawdon Crawley were all in Brussels and there was a great ball given

by a Duchess on the night of June 15, 1815, the night before the Battle of Waterloo? That night there were many people more interested in the ball than the enemy at the front. I always recall the command that came: 'The enemy has passed the Sambre and our left is already engaged. We are to march in three hours.' I keep hoping and waiting for a message of that kind, only I trust our American soldiers will be in camp and ready to march on the night that command reaches us."

Nona shivered a little.

"Please don't talk of war tonight. Of course I long for our American soldiers to get into action, I mean great numbers of them, not just a comparatively few soldiers, such as are here now. Nevertheless, I think I dread the moment when that word shall come more than almost anything in life. I shall worry over you, too, Lieutenant Martin; you see, one is always especially interested in one's patients."

"Thank you," Lieutenant Martin answered so sternly that Nona was a little embarrassed and a little amused.

"No, I had forgotten that part of 'Vanity Fair,' " she added quickly. "I only remember the conclusion, which I learned by heart when I was a small girl and took a more misanthropic view of life: 'Ah! Vanitas, Vanitatum! Which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire, or, having it, is satisfied?' "

Unconsciously Nona sighed as one naturally would after expressing such a sentiment.

But she was stirred out of her self-centered mood by Lieutenant Martin's suddenly stopping and directly facing her.

"That is nonsense; when Thackeray expressed a sentiment like that he was simply tired and disappointed with his own work for the moment. Life isn't all vanity and it means a great deal to do one's task once it is started. Besides, finding love means happiness, and love and work are the fulfilment of desire. As for being satisfied, no one wishes to be satisfied who has any brains."

Then, observing that Nona appeared even more than mildly surprised by such a

wholly unexpected outburst, Lieutenant Martin laughed.

"That does not sound like me, does it? You scarcely look for a sentiment of that character from me. Well, I realize your friend Mr. Dawson would have expressed the idea far better and it may be impertinent for a soldier to differ with a great novelist's philosophy of life. However, I have said exactly what I feel. You see, as a soldier I like a fighter, never a quitter in any cause."

But by this time Nona and Lieutenant Martin had reached the Casino, where Barbara and Mollie Drew, who were already there, found them seats.

Later, Nona was pleased by the places Barbara had chosen, for after Eugenia and Madame Renane and Mildred arrived, she discovered that she had a fairly distinct view of them.

Tonight Eugenia looked unusually tired and worn, in spite of her determined effort at animation and the entertainment of her guest. But then anything apart from the regular routine of her hospital work appeared to arouse in Eugenia unhappy mem-

ories. This large gathering of gay and comparatively untried soldiers could not but fill one with the recollection of what the French soldiers had suffered in the past three years. Surely the American boys would be spared an equal ordeal!

Madame Renane, Nona found oddly interesting.

She was plain, as many French women are, according to our American standards. She must have been nearly middle-aged and was even a little stout. Her brown hair, which was arranged simply, had some gray in it; her face was pale, her expression quiet, except for her eyes. They mirrored a hundred emotions, a hundred ideas.

She sat very quietly beside Eugenia during the first of Barbara's entertainment, applauding with as much enthusiasm and abandon as anyone in the audience at the conclusion of each act, not all of which were of a professional character.

The chorus of American soldiers, whom Lieutenant Kelley had trained, led by Guy Ellis, sang almost every well-known American patriotic air, the French and American

soldiers cheering whole-heartedly, without favoritism.

Then Mollie Drew, looking very pretty in a white dress, with her red-brown hair piled high on her head and her cheeks flushed from excitement to a deep rose, sang in a small voice her two most popular Irish ballads, "Mother Machree" and "A Little Bit of Ireland."

In the last rows of seats it was impossible to hear her; however, this did not take away from the applause she received from every listener in the room.

Mollie refused to sing an encore, but returning to bow her thanks to the audience, a soldier presented her with a great bouquet of red hothouse roses.

Not many roses were blooming these days in this neighborhood in France; besides, Mollie's roses bore the unmistakable suggestion of Paris. But then, although Guy Ellis was only a private in the American army in France, his father was a New York millionaire and intensely proud of his son, and Mollie scarcely needed to find the card hidden inside.

A quartette of French soldiers from the nearest French camp, all of them with well-trained voices, sang the Marseillaise as an introduction to Madame Renane's appearance.

She had disappeared from the audience before they began and after the last verse, when her countrymen had gone, she came quietly out on the improvised stage.

It may be that certain of the American soldiers were disappointed in Madame Renane's appearance, having expected some one younger and more beautiful.

But this did not interfere with the united cheer with which they greeted her, the entire audience rising to its feet and the soldiers waving their hats.

Madame Renane had been accustomed to many greetings. But the surprise and the ardor of this one seemed almost to unnerve her for a moment. Then she removed a little American flag which had been pinned to her dress and waved it enthusiastically in response to the cheers.

When the audience had resumed their seats and were quiet again, the great French

woman said simply, speaking of course in French, but as slowly as she could, that the soldiers might understand:

"It is a great pleasure to me that you wish to hear me recite to you tonight. I am a French mother who has lost her son in this war. All honor to the American boys who have left their homes and come to a far country to help us toward victory. Let France be your adopted country, let every French woman be your adopted mother, until your own land and your own mothers shall claim you again."

What Madame Renane said was so simple that any other woman could have used the same words. But behind her words was the personality of a great woman and in her voice the music of a great actress.

Next she recited a gay little French poem, filled with the courage and good humor of life in camp.

Then Madame Renane spoke again:

"It has been difficult to decide what to recite to you tonight. A speech from one of my plays might not interest you if you were not familiar with the story, since I

cannot speak your language. But there is one story which the whole world knows, the story of, perhaps, the greatest soldier and patriot of France. I mean the story of Jeanne d'Arc. There are those of us in France who have wished recently that Jeanne would come to us again, or someone like her."

Afterwards, Madame Renane recited in the words of a great French writer the life of Jeanne, the Maid sent of God:

"And the Angel appeared unto her and the Maid understood.

"The humble Maid, knowing not how to ride a horse, unskilled in the arts of war, is chosen to bring to our Lord his temporal vicar of Christ. Henceforth, Jeanne knew what great deeds she was to bring to pass."

Madame Renane told the entire story, from Jeanne's first vision at Domremy, her meeting with King Charles at Rheims and her instant recognition of him, disguised in shabby clothes and hid from her among his courtiers. She told of Jeanne's victories, of her triumphs and of her martyr's death.

And as she spoke the great French actress seemed to be Jeanne herself. The American soldiers forgot her middle age, her quiet half-mourning costume, and saw that wonderful young peasant girl, first in her peasant's dress in the woods near her father's home, listening to her voice. She was only a dreaming girl then, with her short hair, her bare feet and peasant's smock and those great wide-open gray eyes.

Then Jeanne as a soldier in a suit of armor on her wonderful white horse, riding always in front of her troops to the glory and salvation of France. At the last she is again a frightened girl, torn from her friends, betrayed and forsaken.

The room was perfectly still for a moment after Madame Renane had finished. For she had created an impression too vivid to be lost immediately. The American boys and their French companions were seeing not the modern battlefield, which was ever before their thoughts, but the older one the great actress had intended them to see.

However, Madame Renane stood waiting, perhaps expecting the applause with which

she was familiar. Then she recognized the silence as the finer tribute. For she put out her hands in a beautiful gesture and added:

"May I say one of Jeanne's own prayers to you tonight, before my farewell?

"'Oh, Jesus Christ, who hast surrounded the heavens with light and kindled the sun and the moon, command, if it be thy will, the martyrs, not one only, but all, to clasp their hands and on bended knee to remove the great sorrow from France, and by that holy and august merit ordain that they may have a righteous peace.'"

Then Madame Renane with a little nod of appreciation and thanks quickly left the stage.

She came back later to receive the smaller laurel wreath, which Lieutenant Kelley presented her in the name of the American camp.

But, like the French woman she was, after holding it for a moment and pressing her lips to the evergreen, she flung the wreath back into the audience.

"Keep it, my Sammees," she exclaimed, "for the laurels of France are for you!"

However, when, after a few moments, Eugenia Castaigne joined the great French woman, she found her deeply depressed.

"Ah!" she murmured, "you have asked me here to amuse your American boys and what have I done? If I have done anything I have made them sad. You do not wish a French tragedienne these days; what you want is your Charlée Chaplín."

And she spoke with such a funny combination of sorrow and chagrin, and withal pronounced Charlie Chaplin's name with such an amusing French accent, that Eugenia, who had been sternly holding back her tears all evening, broke into a laugh.

"We may have Charlie Chaplin many evenings, you but one, Madame Renane, and you are mistaken if you do not know you have given us the highest kind of pleasure, which is inspiration."

When the greater number of the audience had departed, Nona and Lieutenant Martin walked slowly out together. Lieutenant Martin was tired and did not feel equal to talking to many of his comrades.

However, Madame Bonnèt and Berthe were waiting near the door to speak to him, and as Berthe's recitation had been one of the most successful of the evening, Lieutenant Martin felt he must congratulate her.

They were talking only a moment or two, but Nona stood a little apart. She was glancing carelessly about, when she saw standing only a few feet behind Madame Bonnèt a little French girl, holding a French soldier by the hand.

Another moment she continued staring and then touched Lieutenant Martin on the arm, directing his attention to what had attracted hers.

Madame Bonnèt observed them both.

"Why are you both so interested?" she asked. "It cannot be possible you know my little French girl? She wandered into our camp only two or three days ago, bringing a French soldier with her, some poor fellow who has been injured and has forgotten his own history. She says they have been tramping from village to village, hoping to find his regiment or someone who

would recognize him. People have been kind to them everywhere and have fed them along the way. It seems the French soldier was stripped of his uniform, his number, everything that might identify him. Only his little friend insists upon calling him Captain. They came to the American camp by mistake, believing it a French one. Then some of the soldiers brought them to me and I am caring for them before they move on again."

Nona went over to the little girl and held out her hand.

"Jeanne," she began, "you will not recognize me, but I saw you one day from a car window and we talked to each other. It is late tonight, but I am coming to Madame Bonnèt's tomorrow to talk to you again if I may."

Jeanne made a little curtsey.

"I do remember and I shall be happy to see you," she returned, with unfailing French courtesy.

CHAPTER XIII

A Closer Bond

NEXT day as soon as she had the opportunity Nona walked over to Madame Bonnèt's.

She had made an effort to see Barbara and try to awaken her interest in their little French acquaintance, but again Barbara had disappeared. But then she naturally had a good many things to attend to in connection with winding up the business connected with the entertainment of the night before.

And Nona did not object to going to Madame Bonnèt's alone. This was one of the things she had been fond of doing ever since her meeting with the splendid French woman. However, one could not expect the privilege often, for no one was so busy as Madame Bonnèt, nor had a greater number of calls upon her time. Scarcely a soldier in the division located

within her village, but came to Madame Bonnèt for advice or sympathy whenever anything went wrong.

Nona was never to forget the morning of this day when so many strange things were to occur.

It was a day caught between summer and early fall, with the beauty and fragrance of both. Moreover, in the French country there is ever a curious appeal that only a few lands have. It is a sense of intimacy, a sense of nearness to nature, as if she were really the great mother, viewing birth and life and death with a wonderful patience, knowing that within her lie always the seeds and the garden for the new generations to come.

Besides, Nona had brought Duke with her. He seemed to like to walk with her more than with anyone beside his mistress. But recently Duke had been growing noticeably older and wore a look of noble depression, which one observes now and then in the aging of a fine dog.

Nona went past Madame Bonnèt's former home, which she had given up to the

American officers, only glancing up at the tower where she and the other nurses had seen their first American drill upon French soil.

Of course, Madame Bonnèt had probably taken Jeanne and her soldier into her own tiny home with herself and Berthe, finding a place for them somehow.

But perhaps the little girl and her companion would be outside in the garden. As Nona went down the path between the vegetables she had the impression that there were figures near the dove cote, a little hidden from observation.

Within a few yards of them she stopped and to her own annoyance uttered a slight exclamation.

Barbara Thornton and Lieutenant Kelley were deep in some kind of intimate conversation.

Nona saw that Barbara flushed with anger on recognizing her; there was in her manner almost a suggestion that she believed Nona had purposely come to spy upon her.

But Lieutenant Kelley came forward immediately.

Nona thought he looked tired and a good deal older since his arrival in France. But then she knew how hard the younger American officers were working with the idea of being able to assist in the training of the new troops when they arrived.

"Is there anyone you wish, or anything I can do for you?" he asked with his usual courtesy.

Nona shook her head.

"I am sorry to have interrupted you. I was merely looking for Madame Bonnèt. A little French girl is here with her whom I wish to see."

"You mean Jeanne?" Lieutenant Kelley answered. "Isn't it strange, her coming here to our camp. I saw the little girl with the French soldier only yesterday and recalled our having seen her at the railroad station that day on our way to camp. But you are not interrupting us, or at least Mrs. Thornton and I were having a conversation which could bear being interrupted."

Barbara had come forward by this time looking ashamed of her lack of self-con-

trol, although her face was still a little flushed.

"Don't be absurd, Nona!" she exclaimed. "I was talking to Lieutenant Kelley on business. But what is this about a little French girl?"

Nona explained and Barbara linked her arm in hers, almost equally surprised and interested.

"Queer that we should all have remembered the child and her soldier so well. But no, it is not queer; one could scarcely have forgotten such a companionship. May I come with you?"

So Nona and Barbara started toward Madame Bonnèt's tiny house, leaving Lieutenant Kelley talking to Duke and trying to make friends with him. The great dog was friendly enough, but not disposed toward intimacies.

Just outside the door the two girls stopped. Someone was about to open it, perhaps having heard their approach.

The next moment Jeanne stepped out, leading her friend as she always did. But at the sight of Barbara and Nona she left him standing a moment alone

and came forward, giving her hand to Nona, but fixing her eyes upon Barbara Thornton.

"It was you who told me to do my best to help my Captain find his friends. I did not forget. When we could manage we slipped away from our convalescent hospital without saying good-bye, as we would have been forbidden to leave. Since then we have traveled many miles, yet nothing has come of it." She gave a tiny shrug of her childish shoulders, half as an expression of philosophy, half as an acknowledgment of defeat.

"But isn't the Captain himself better?" Nona inquired, although convinced beforehand of the truth.

The French soldier, whom, as an act of courtesy both to him and to his guardian, everyone spoke of as "Captain," remained in the same spot Jeanne had placed him, his head hanging down and with a great bandage tied over the upper part of his face. As a matter of fact, he was thinner and more shrunken and vaguer than before he and Jeanne had started upon their

pilgrimage. But then they had walked so far, reached so many strange places and so many questions had been asked of him, impossible for him to answer! More than ever was the French soldier dependent on the touch of Jeanne's little hand.

And she, for the moment, had deserted him!

Then, for a brief time, Nona and Barbara and Lieutenant Kelley were overcome with surprise and consternation. It chanced that Jeanne did not notice at once, or she might never have allowed the thing to take place.

Lieutenant Kelley had remained where he was in the lower part of the garden, allowing Barbara and Nona to have their meeting with Jeanne undisturbed. As a precaution he had placed his hand on Duke's collar, thinking perhaps the dog might frighten the little girl, or more likely, since it was difficult to associate timidity with Jeanne, that he might startle her companion.

Suddenly, when he was not anticipating

any action on Duke's part, the dog had looked at him with an expression which was imploring and at the same time savage. Afterwards, he had broken away and with a few leaps had crossed the small space of the garden, making directly for the injured soldier.

The situation seemed incredible, Duke had never deliberately attacked any human being before. Now to attack a defenseless man!

Hugh Kelley ran a few steps, drawing his pistol. He would not hurt the dog seriously, if it were possible to avoid, but Jeanne's friend must be protected.

However, the great dog had not thrown the soldier down, as they had all expected. As he reached him he stopped short, looked at him closely and then with indescribable gentleness and affection began licking his hand, pressing his great silver-gray body as close as possible to the emaciated figure without disturbing him.

And the French soldier did not seem frightened. Gropingly, it is true, nevertheless he reached down and laid his hand on Duke's head.

An instant before Jeanne had witnessed the meeting, but seeing that the dog did not intend to hurt her friend, she had remained still.

Now she turned to Nona and Barbara her eyes filled with tears.

"My Captain has found someone who knows him," she remarked quietly. Then she went over and took the French soldier's disengaged hand.

"Jeanne," he whispered.

"Are we mad, Nona? I think perhaps I am," Barbara murmured, her face suddenly having grown white and her voice shaking.

Nona shook her head.

"Barbara, if what we think is true, would it not be better never to have found out. Besides, you did not recognize him, nor did I? Can Duke have been wiser?"

Barbara was crying. "Of course, Duke has senses we do not possess. Besides, we were only his friends and Duke loved him. I thought there was something familiar in the figure. No, I did not, there was never any human being so changed. Poor Eugenia! I can't bear it."

Lieutenant Kelley was now standing nearby, looking extremely unhappy over Barbara's distress and extremely puzzled.

"We think perhaps Jeanne's friend is someone we know," Nona tried to explain, "only we cannot really believe it and there seems no way of finding out without great difficulty and sorrow."

"Whoever he may be, Duke knows his master," Hugh Kelley answered in a tone of entire conviction. "I believe in all the cases of this kind of which one has ever heard, there has never been a mistake."

"Jeanne, why does your Captain always wear that bandage over his face? Is it that he is blind, or has he some wound there? Please don't think I ask from curiosity, but unless one can see him——"

Jeanne whispered something and the French soldier immediately bent his head. Slowly Jeanne unwound the bandage.

"He can see a little, my Captain," Jeanne answered proudly, "only the surgeons have thought it best that he rest his eyes for a time, until his sight comes wholly back."

"Please look and decide, Nona dear, I don't dare," Barbara whispered. However, she did look of course and both she and Nona recognized in Jeanne's soldier Eugenia's husband, Captain Henri Castaigne.

And yet he was so changed it was not strange that they had not recognized him in their chance meetings before today.

The Captain Castaigne whom they remembered, the friend who had said farewell to them at the little house with the blue front door, which was a part of his own estate, had been young and gallant. He had borne himself with a fine soldierly erectness, had been full of gayety and good humor and charm, one's ideal of a French soldier and lover, for he and Eugenia had been married only lately.

Now he was Jeanne's friend, but the pathos of him was beyond expression. Not in death, but in life one measures the tragedies of war.

However, the eyes, the shape of the head, even the figure itself, left no chance for doubting in either Nona's or Barbara's

consciousness, much as they would have preferred to doubt.

"You know Madame Castaigne, Lieutenant Kelley," Nona said, as soon as she could speak. "Her husband, Captain Castaigne, has been reported as among the missing for a good many months. We believe Jeanne's friend is Captain Castaigne; it may even be that Jeanne's name made some slight impression upon his memory, for Gene is the name by which Captain Castaigne always called his wife. But we don't know what to do."

"I don't feel we ought to tell Eugenia; at least, I know I never can," Barbara interrupted.

"But we must, Barbara, we have no right to hide such a discovery," Nona argued. "Still, I do not think I can be the one to go to Eugenia first. Oh, I did not dream I was such a coward!"

But at this moment another figure came walking toward them, with a great bowl in her arms and an expression of ever triumphant courage on her smooth, fine face. It was Madame Bonnèt on the way to feed her carrier pigeons.

"We must ask Madame Bonnèt what to do. She will be able to tell us," Nona exclaimed and went forward with her story.

CHAPTER XIV

Greater Love

OF course there was but one decision possible and Nona volunteered to bring Eugenia to Madame Bonnèt's.

She was not to give a reason for her coming except to say that Madame Bonnèt wished to speak to Madame Castaigne on a matter of great importance.

Yet even this responsibility Barbara refused to share with Nona. For, although finally agreeing that Eugenia must be told, she vanished at once after reaching the hospital and went on duty without seeing her friend, for fear there might be something in her expression that would arouse suspicion.

Naturally, Nona felt the same fear; however, she could not escape the situation and Eugenia must have the friends who cared for her with her at so crucial an hour. Nona could scarcely conceive of Eugenia's failing one of them at a time of like need.

She managed to have a moment with Mildred Thornton and to confide their impression to her. But Nona did not feel that there could be any possibility of a mistake. Another point had been that Duke had refused to return to the hospital with them, that so far neither physical force nor persuasion had induced him to leave the French soldier's side. There could be no one save Captain Castaigne to whom he would show this allegiance.

It chanced that Eugenia was extremely busy when Nona found her to deliver Madame Bonnèt's message. A number of American soldiers, who had been fighting as volunteers with the French army, having been wounded at the front, had just been sent on to Eugenia's hospital for especial care.

"I am sorry, I shall not be able to see Madame Bonnèt until tomorrow. Someone will please deliver my message to her; not you, Nona dear, you already look tired," and Eugenia had actually started to move away to her work, as if the conversation were closed.

But to Nona any postponement appeared impossible. Eugenia herself would never forgive them, should anything now interfere with her meeting with her husband, however tragically he may have changed.

"But, dear, it is something *really* important Madame Bonnèt wishes to tell you. I don't think you should wait until tomorrow. Please come with me at once."

Then Eugenia had turned around and looked at Nona searchingly.

"Very well, Nona, as soon as you have had lunch. You feel you wish to go with me to Madame Bonnèt's? You would rather I did not go alone?"

And Nona nodded, not trusting herself to speak and praying that Eugenia would ask no more questions.

Nor did she, even during their walk to Madame Bonnèt's, which seemed to Nona Davis about five times longer than it had when she had taken it alone on the morning of the same day.

Eugenia talked of matters connected with the hospital. Once she said that she hoped Barbara would now be content to

devote more energy to her Red Cross nursing. They would be a good deal busier at the hospital in the future and she had merely allowed Barbara a greater freedom in her hours of work, expecting that she would be more content to adjust herself to the regular hospital routine later on.

"Marriage does not seem to have made Bab settle down; it appears rather to have had the opposite effect," Eugenia had commented.

She had smiled at the moment, but Nona did not feel so convinced afterwards that Eugenia had not been more conscious of Barbara's attitude than she had believed.

Then, just before they entered the garden at Madame Bonnèt's, Eugenia stopped a moment.

"Nona, has Madame Bonnèt's wish to see me anything to do with news of my husband?"

Eugenia asked the question quietly, yet she must have had the thought in her mind all the while. Her face was a little white, but except for this her self-control was wonderful

"Yes," Nona answered, not appreciating that her own expression made it impossible for Madame Castaigne to think the information she so desired could be of a happy kind.

For Nona's one predominating fear was that Jeanne would be outdoors with her soldier and that Eugenia should first see her husband being led about by his little French friend. Yet would she recognize him in such a situation? Nona could not feel sure.

However, Madame Bonnèt was watching for their approach and came out at once and put her arm through Eugenia's.

"We have news of your husband, Captain Castaigne. No, it is not good news, my dear, although he is not dead, nor is he a prisoner," she said without waiting, knowing how hard delay would be for Eugenia.

Besides, she must take up her burden.

"You would rather not be with us, Nona. Then you stay here in the garden while I talk to Madame Castaigne alone."

Nona had a sensation of utter gratitude when she saw Eugenia and Madame Bonnèt enter the tiny little French house to-

gether. There had been that in Madame Bonnèt's face and manner which made Nona feel no one else could be so wise or so kind. Besides, Eugenia would be braver than most people. She had not been so young as the rest of the group of American Red Cross girls at the beginning of the war and certainly her experiences since had left their impression.

Nona found a little bench in the garden at some distance from Madame Bonnèt's house and sat down. She had not fully realized how her knees were trembling and how utterly cowardly she felt, so much so that she wished even now to be as far away as possible, so as not by any chance to see Eugenia's meeting with her husband, or hear any sound that she might make.

She had been sitting there alone for several moments when the little French girl, Jeanne, came slowly down the path toward her. For the first time Jeanne was without her Captain and for the first time she appeared unhappy. Indeed, she looked as if she were fighting back tears.

"She wished to see him alone and with-

out me," Jeanne explained, taking the seat next her, which Nona indicated. "I think it would have been wiser had I stayed with him. Madame Bonnèt came out to tell me that he did not know her when they first met. She thinks he may know her later. Madame Bonnèt left them alone, also, but I hope she will not ask him any questions. It makes him so tired when people ask questions."

Nona noticed that Jeanne carefully avoided using Eugenia's name, or even Captain Castaigne's. But it was simple enough to understand Jeanne's emotions, they were not so unlike many older persons'. She had found her Captain's friends; more than that, she had discovered the one human being who cared for him most, and this was what they had set out upon their pilgrimage to seek. But now her Captain had no longer the same need for her and Jeanne had no one else.

Understanding her mood, Nona slipped her arm across the little girl's shoulders, but very gently and hesitatingly, for Jeanne might not care for her caress. She had a

curious pride and dignity, this little French Jeanne, which no one could fail to respect.

"But, Jeanne, Madame Castaigne, and Captain Castaigne's old mother, indeed all of his friends must be always grateful to you. You see, without you they might never have known what had become of him and he could never have had the same care. Now he may grow so much better that he will some day be able to thank you himself."

Nona did not really believe this last part of her speech, but Jeanne looked a little happier.

"He *is* better *now*," she returned, "and I could have cared for him. He understands almost everything I say and you see he must have recognized Duke, since he has wished to have him beside him since their meeting this morning."

Jeanne spoke as proudly as a mother would speak of a child, but her words and manner made Nona almost ill, remembering Captain Castaigne as she had known him.

She was grateful when, a little later, Eugenia sent word that she return to the hospital and leave her for a time with

Madame Bonnèt. She was to ask Mildred Thornton to take charge of the hospital for the rest of the day, Eugenia would return toward evening.

Since she occupied the same room with her, Nona dreaded the return. But it chanced that she did not know when Eugenia finally came back.

It was ten o'clock when Nona, having completed her hospital work, was free to go to bed.

Then she found Eugenia in their bed-room already undressed.

"I was tired, Nona. I hope things at the hospital have gone on all right without me. But then I know they have, Mildred is more capable than I am."

Then, when Nona came and put her arms about her friend, Eugenia said:

"You must not be too sorry for me, dear. After a time I shall be happier to have Henri like this than never to have known what became of him. But for his own sake, that is what is hardest to bear. He would so much rather have gone out altogether."

"But don't you think he will grow better

in time?" Nona asked, wondering again at Eugenia's strength.

"I don't know. I am going to hope for it and fight for it with all my strength and with all the skill we can find in the world. I shall not give up my work if it is possible to keep on, but my husband must be first. He will come here to the hospital; Madame Bonnèt and I think that best just now. We can care for him here and the great thing will be first to make him physically strong. He did not seem to wish to come tonight, but tomorrow everything will be arranged."

"And Jeanne?" Nona inquired almost involuntarily. "What is to become of her?"

But she might have known.

"Jeanne? Why she will come here to be with us too. At least, I think she will. I shall do my best. Of course she does not like me now; she feels that I must inevitably separate her from her Captain. But I think I will be able to persuade her that her Captain still needs her. He turned to her with such relief from me when she came back to join us. Oh, yes, it is pretty hideous, Nona. But after a while——"

And Nona was glad to see Gene's courage fail for a little time.

Then she added: "Do you mind my talking? Somehow it is a relief to talk. You see, after three years of war nursing I have not many illusions left. And if ever this war is over, we women must not allow another war in this world. It is our responsibility, our sin, I sometimes feel. We have accepted this world as men have made it and we have not tried to mold it nearer to our ideals. But there——" and Eugenia smiled. "What a time for me to be talking suffrage and how all this modern woman attitude hurts Henri's preconceived ideas! I am still filled with wonder at his ever having cared for me. It helps to know that Jeanne declares Henri is already better in the months she has been his friend. It is odd, isn't it, that our names should sound somewhat alike? Yet somehow I keep thinking of the great Jeanne whom Madame Renane impersonated the other night. For it was almost an impersonation, we saw the Jeanne d'Arc so plainly. Well, a little Saint Jeanne has appeared to me! But

good-night, Nona, we must both go to sleep."

And Nona did go to sleep immediately, and so could not know when Eugenia was able to follow her example.

CHAPTER XV

An Amazing Suggestion

IT is extraordinary how important a part routine plays in this human life.

A week or more after Captain Castaigne's installation at the American hospital his presence and condition came to be an accepted fact.

Mildred Thornton had taken charge of his case for Eugenia. Indeed, Eugenia had asked the favor of her and Mildred knew just how much faith and confidence such a request indicated.

However, at first her work was just to build up Captain Castaigne's general health and to keep him amused and untroubled.

For this reason Eugenia did not see her husband very often, since her presence appeared always to disturb him. He did not know her, but he seemed to feel that he should know her and that he was wounding her or angering her by his stupidity.

Neither did the old Countess Castaigne make an effort to visit her son. Eugenia wrote her of his condition, but taking the most cheerful view and saying that later, when Captain Castaigne was better, they would both feel happier in meeting.

Even Jeanne spent less time in the society of her Captain. Yet she was with him several hours each day, when they took walks together, or she merely sat talking quietly with him. But when there were other people about Jeanne would not remain. Neither would she live at the hospital. There was still a prejudice against Eugenia which Jeanne did not endeavor to conquer. But for Nona Davis and Barbara Thornton she felt an affection; it was as if she had adopted them as her first American friends.

Moreover, this friendliness she extended to include Lieutenant Martin and Lieutenant Kelley, whose acquaintance she had made on the same day.

But as a matter of fact, among the four, Lieutenant Martin was Jeanne's closest friend. One would scarcely have suspected him of knowing how to make friends with

a little girl; nevertheless, they were most devoted to each other.

Lieutenant Martin had recovered sufficiently to return to his quarters at camp and as Jeanne continued living with Madame Bonnèt and Berthe, they were able to meet frequently.

However, Jeanne had become a tremendous favorite with a large number of the American soldiers in camp, they insisting that she was their especial little French Jeanne and that her arrival at their camp and her presence among them must bring good luck both to them and to France.

So, by way of amusing themselves and her, Jeanne was taught to shoot and to ride horseback. She was even taken for short flights in American aeroplanes when the men in the nearby aviation practice fields were making unimportant ascensions near at home.

Guy Ellis wrote to his mother the entire romantic story of the appearance of Jeanne and her French Captain, and in response Mrs. Ellis sent Jeanne a trunk of clothes, with an outfit which included two khaki

suits, with the riding trousers and coat, the skirt and hat.

So Jeanne became not the little daughter of this particular American division, but a kind of adopted sister. And it was small wonder that the little French girl did not find life at the hospital entertaining in the hours when she could not be with her Captain.

"Jeanne will have to go to school some day, but for the present let her be happy in her own way. Madame Bonnèt and Berthe will see that she does not get into mischief," was Eugenia's only comment.

Although no longer a patient, Lieutenant Martin came now and then to the hospital to call on his friends whenever he had leisure. But this was not often, as he had returned to the work at camp with all his former vigor and enthusiasm. It was rumored that a certain number of the American soldiers were soon to be chosen and sent to the trenches to have actual experience in fighting. There was no doubt that Lieutenant Martin hoped to be among the number.

As far as he could, Lieutenant Martin appeared to be trying to make amends for his bad temper during the early days of his illness. But no one of his nurses had paid any serious attention to this, knowing it to be a common masculine failing when a man is not dangerously ill. Courage and gayety come more often to the soldier when he is seriously hurt, when all his pluck, all his sporting blood must be called upon to help.

Personally, Nona Davis, who had devoted more of her time than any one of the other nurses to Lieutenant Martin, felt nothing but friendliness toward him. Besides, she could not fail to admire the spirit in which he had received his injury. There had been never any resentment or bitterness against the man who must have intentionally wounded him, but only a determined effort not to allow a scandal to mar the fair name of his camp.

Moreover, Nona had not entirely forgotten Lieutenant Martin's farewell to her, although she had made a determined effort to thrust his words out of her mind. He had thanked her, of course, for her care, and

had then added with a determined expression in his gray eyes and a slight tightening of the muscles of his mouth which she had learned to recognize as concealing deep feeling,

"Please remember that I am not your patient any longer, Miss Davis, and therefore whatever I may say to you in the future will not be an illusion of illness. I know you do not care for me, do not even especially like me, but perhaps I may make you proud of me. In any case it may be worth while for you to remember some day that you are the only girl, and not only that, the only woman I have ever cared for in my life, or ever will."

Then, although Nona had replied as politely as she could to Lieutenant Martin that he was altogether mistaken and had afterwards said the same thing to herself, she was not entirely convinced.

However, the real truth was that she was having more enjoyment at the present time from her acquaintance with Philip Dawson than from any other source.

She had written to Sonya that she had

never known so clever or so agreeable a fellow and that she was seeing him whenever either of them were free.

Something in the letter, Sonya could not have told just what, had conveyed the impression, made her a little anxious, so much so that she had even sent a short note to Eugenia, apologizing for taking her time, but inquiring just what Eugenia knew of Philip Dawson.

As Eugenia could imagine no reason for Sonya's interest and did not take Nona's friendship seriously, she had simply replied that she knew very little, except that Mr. Dawson was regarded as a brilliant newspaper correspondent, was very agreeable and had an excellent reputation in his profession. She also wrote that she considered Sonya need give the young man no especial consideration, as Nona was much more interested in her Red Cross nursing than in any other thing or any other person.

However, this had not persuaded Eugenia to interfere with Nona's new friendship, nor to oppose Nona's taking long walks with Philip Dawson two or three times a week.

Eugenia had so many cares, so many anxieties, she could not be a very watchful chaperon.

In coming abroad to do war nursing she felt that only American girls who knew enough of life to take care of themselves should be trusted with the experience.

But Eugenia was afterwards to be sorry she had not been more vigilant.

Philip Dawson and Nona in the weeks of late summer and early autumn had really explored the greater part of the nearby French country side.

The two hours of freedom which she had each day from work, unless there was some unusual pressure, Nona liked best to spend outdoors. And never before had she known so delightful a companion.

There seemed to be endless subjects of conversation between them, of which neither grew weary. Yet now and then they would walk beside each other or in single file, not speaking for a quarter of an hour or more.

There was no suggestion of an emotion between them. Philip Dawson had never said anything which Nona could construe

in any such fashion. He was the most restful and at the same time the most stimulating friend she had ever known. There was none of the restlessness and the changing tempers she had felt in her brief interest in Eugino Zoli.

It was only that if Nona had an idea, she was anxious to know if Mr. Dawson thought it worth while, or if she were ill or tired she wished to count upon his sympathy. But she was not selfish in this. She knew that Philip Dawson came to her as freely and that he insisted his talks with her inspired him to better work and to a wiser judgment of people and affairs.

However, on this particular afternoon when Nona had only two hours to give to their walk, he had kept her waiting for half an hour. In spite of her effort toward keeping a perfectly reasonable attitude in their friendship, Nona felt undeniably cross.

Moreover, when Philip Dawson arrived there was no pretense of an apology.

"We will not be able to walk any distance this afternoon, there is something very special I have to tell you. Only we must

get away from the hospital and in some place where no one will be able to hear us," he began at once in a rather business-like manner to which Nona was unaccustomed.

However, Nona immediately found herself in a properly humble and obedient state of mind, with none of the feeling of resentment or of opposition which Lieutenant Martin more often than not aroused in her.

Having come out to the hospital gate to wait for him in the fresh air, and being prepared to be politely reproachful, instead Nona made no reply except to walk quickly along beside her companion, wondering what possible serious thing he could have to tell her.

One of the great reliefs of their friendship had been that they were not often serious together for any great length of time. For, however serious the subject of their conversation might be for a few moments, there was soon the relief of a gently humorous point of view.

But today there was no suggestion of anything except gravity in Philip Dawson's

face and Nona felt slightly uneasy. But she did not feel deeply so; really there did not appear to be any cause that could seriously interfere with their understanding of each other, and this was, of course, the important thing. Neither did Nona realize that this was an unusual conviction on her part concerning a friend whom she had known so short a time, nor as a matter of fact did she really know anything of his personal history, except what he had told her himself.

The little French farm house with the peach orchard could be reached by strenuous walking in half an hour, although frequently Nona and Philip Dawson had taken an hour to arrive there. This would leave half an hour for their talk and nearly anything may be said in half an hour.

Besides, there really was no nearer place where one could feel safe from interruption. For anywhere in the neighborhood of the camp soldiers were apt to turn up at any moment.

"You look worried; I hope nothing has happened to annoy you," Nona began, as

soon as they had found their favorite resting place and she could recover her breath.

Philip Dawson stopped frowning and laughed.

"I am afraid I have tired you out; I did not think of it. But then so few girls really know how to walk. You did not at first, Miss Davis, but you are learning."

Nona shook her head. "Don't be tiresome, I am not going to argue that question with you now since we have discussed it so many times before. Besides, you scarcely ran me all the way out here to give me that valuable information."

Nona laid her hand lightly on her companion's.

"Don't worry over what you must tell me and please don't break it to me gently, I hate that method. Are you going away?"

"Not now. Would you care?" Philip Dawson answered, and then as if he wished to disregard both their speeches:

"No, I am not going to waste time and I am not going to talk of either of us this afternoon, fond as we are of talking about

ourselves. I hope we may have a great many other chances. But today I want to talk to you about something in which, thank heaven, neither of us has any part, except as it may affect our friends. You know I told you some time ago that every effort was being quietly made to find out the soldier in camp who tried to get rid of Lieutenant Martin and just what his reason was for wishing to have him away from camp for a time. Well, the reason has been discovered. There was spying going on and it was reasonable to suppose that Martin, who was watching pretty closely, would have soon made the discovery. The man who is suspected is pretty close to him."

"Yes," Nona returned, "but whom do you mean? I know only a few men in camp at all intimately."

"The man who is suspected is Lieutenant Kelley, Martin's companion and intimate friend." Philip Dawson answered dryly, "and the particularly ugly part of it is that there is a girl in the case, or perhaps I should say a woman, since she is married. I mean your friend Mrs. Richard Thornton."

"That is the most ridiculous statement I ever heard in my life and one of the wickedest," Nona responded instantly, wondering how she could ever have thought she had any faith in the man beside her and seeing another house of cards come tumbling down.

"As a matter of fact, I agree with you in part," Philip Dawson answered, perfectly understanding Nona's attitude, but showing no resentment. "I know nothing of your friend. I think if she is married she has been seeing Lieutenant Kelley too often for his good or hers. Oh, I don't mean anything, except that they have taken walks together and gone in for this business of arranging entertainment for the soldiers and——. But I really don't know anything of this at first hand, only what I have heard whispered recently. Nothing has yet been said openly, that is why I am telling you now, Nona. Perhaps you can help your friend, if she deserves your help. My own view is that Lieutenant Hugh Kelley is about as innocent of mischief as I am. He is only a kind of kid, if he is a West

Point graduate, and even if he has been neglecting his work a little, he is utterly incapable of treachery. He has been homesick and I suppose he is a bit in love when he knows he has no right to be, which takes the edge off of things. But as for sending news to Germany about the American camp, it is the most preposterous idea I ever heard. No West Pointer was ever a traitor. But goodness, Nona, I did not mean to frighten you; please don't look so wretched. The thing will have to be cleared up. Lieutenant Martin insists that Kelley had nothing on earth to do with the injury to him, nor to the fact that some American camp news has been getting to a source we would most of us give our lives to keep it away from. He wants Kelley told what the suspicion is against him. The mere fact that they happened to be together at the time of the injury and that Lieutenant Kelley had dropped behind and, oh, well, there are a few other peculiar circumstances which have been discovered since, but to my mind no circumstantial evidence is proof against a man's clean record."

"But it is not Lieutenant Kelley I am thinking of; it is Barbara," Nona interrupted. "Of course Lieutenant Kelley is innocent; no one could look at him or talk to him five minutes and have any other conviction. The men in camp who are saying things against him are merely trying to shield themselves."

Nona was unashamedly crying.

"But the dreadful thing to me is that you, or that anyone has dared to talk in an unkind way about Barbara Thornton, to feel that her name has even been discussed. Why, she is younger than any one of us and Eugenia and Mildred and I should have taken better care of her. Oh, I do not know what to do or say, Barbara will be so heartbroken."

"Nevertheless please do not talk of this with me, Nona," Philip Dawson responded gently. "It has been difficult enough for me to tell you. Madame Castaigne and Mrs. Thornton are the persons with whom you must discuss it. I believe in any case Lieutenant Kelley will be entirely cleared. But it will be wiser for her sake and his if

Mrs. Thornton gives up their friendship in the future."

Philip Dawson had never spoken to her, calling her by her first name before this afternoon. But Nona was too engrossed to give the fact any particular attention.

CHAPTER XVI

Meet for Repentance

NONA did not know what to do, whether to go first to Eugenia Castaigne or to Barbara herself. Then she decided that it would possibly be fairer to go directly with her warning to Barbara. In Barbara's place she would have preferred not having Eugenia prejudiced by an outside person.

However, Nona felt that she was having rather more responsibilities toward her friends than she cared to undertake.

Certainly the duty ahead of her was an utterly disagreeable and thankless one! To warn Barbara that her name was being associated with that of Lieutenant Kelley, that there were even other disagreeable rumors, having some mysterious connection with spying, in which she might possibly be supposed to be playing a part, well, Barbara could scarcely be expected

to receive such information calmly, or to feel anything but anger and resentment toward the person who brought her such ill news.

Moreover, Nona knew that Barbara had realized she had not altogether approved of her recent behavior and would be the more annoyed for this reason that she should be the messenger.

Several times Nona almost concluded that she would let the whole matter drop. Sooner or later, in some fashion, the gossip or, perhaps, a serious accusation, would eventually reach Barbara. Possibly some one would come to Madame Castaigne or to Mildred Thornton with the story. In either case she would escape all responsibility.

But, seriously, Nona believed that Barbara should be warned. Her entire behavior, although it had been indiscreet, was perfectly innocent. Therefore, it was unfortunate that she should be the subject of disagreeable discussion, when Barbara herself could, in all probability, end it, whatever she might be forced to suffer

as a consequence. Nona finally concluded that she owed it not only to her old friendship with Barbara, but to Barbara's husband, Richard Thornton, to tell Barbara what Philip Dawson had confided to her. For it had been Philip Dawson's judgment that Barbara should know, and Nona had confidence in his opinion, if not in her own.

That same evening, after dinner, Nona went directly to Barbara's room. Whether or not she would find her there she had no idea, as Barbara had not been in the dining-room. But then she might possibly be on duty with a patient.

Fortunately, Barbara now occupied a room to herself. After Mildred Thornton had undertaken the care of Captain Castaigne, she had changed into a small room adjoining his, in order that she might be near should he require her attention during the night.

A little later Mollie Drew was to move across the hall to share Barbara's room. The week before, Agatha Burton had unexpectedly departed for Paris, saying that she had been called home to New York

by the illness of her mother and probably could not return to continue her Red Cross work for several months. However, as Eugenia was expecting two new nurses who had just sailed from a port in the United States, the loss of Agatha's aid was not important.

When Nona knocked at her friend's door, there was a brief silence, and then a voice inquired:

"Who is it wishes to speak to me? I would prefer to see no one; I am not very well."

But when Nona had given her name in response, Barbara immediately opened her door.

"Come in, do, Nona, I am so glad to see you. I have been thinking that I would send word for you to come to me, only I was afraid that I might interfere with your work."

Barbara spoke in the quick fashion characteristic of her. Tonight, however, there was something unusual in her manner, a kind of suppressed nervousness. Now, before Nona could reply to her, she began walking up and down the tiny room.

It was not dark, yet the early dusk had fallen. So Nona could see that Barbara really did look ill. She was extremely pale and her big dark-blue eyes revealed unaccustomed shadows beneath them.

So, instantly Nona made up her mind that her own disagreeable information must wait until a serener hour.

"Of course you should have sent for me, Barbara. But suppose, if you are not well, you lie down and then tell me what is the matter afterwards."

Impatiently Barbara shook her head.

"Oh, I am not ill, at least not in the way you think. I only told that story in order to keep anyone from coming in whom I did not wish to see. Then I was afraid that it might be either Mildred or Gene, and I did not even wish to see them. I did not *really* wish to see anyone except you, Nona."

Barbara was talking in a somewhat incoherent fashion, but Nona did not attempt to interrupt her nor to ask for an explanation.

She had not taken off her nurse's cos-

tume, the white cap and dress with the Red Cross band.

But then, in her Red Cross uniform Barbara Thornton frequently made people think of a stage nurse, she looked so little and young and so extremely piquant.

Even at the present moment Nona thought that no one had the right to take Barbara too seriously. She was really too young to have assumed the responsibilities of marriage.

"I have been behaving very badly, Nona," Barbara confessed suddenly, but not ceasing her walking up and down, "and I am being punished for it with the comfortable knowledge that I deserve my punishment. But the worst is my punishment has only begun. I don't know what will become of me when Dick finally hears."

Nona sat down on one of the two little stiff-backed chairs in the room, but made no suggestion that Barbara should follow her example.

She knew that Barbara would be able to talk more easily if she continued moving.

"You know, Nona, that I have been

allowing Lieutenant Kelley to think I was unmarried. No, you do not know this. You only heard me speak of his making this mistake at first, and you must have supposed I had told him the truth before now. But I did not tell him, and, well, I might as well confess the whole story, as I have no right to spare myself anything. Ever since our meeting I have been flirting with him a little. Oh, I did not consider that it would make any difference to him, I presumed he would soon be going away to fight and I meant to confess then. I simply thought as he was a Kentuckian, and accustomed to making himself charming to girls, he was amusing himself with me just as I was having a good time with him. I even supposed he might be engaged to some one at home. Certainly I never dreamed of his taking his feeling for me seriously. Then, this afternoon, when Lieutenant Kelley had an hour off duty and I met him in the garden at Madame Bonnèt's, why—why, Nona, he told me he loved me, and actually asked me to marry him. Some day, perhaps, I may get over the

shame and pain of it, but tonight I feel that I never can."

And, dropping down on the side of her bed, Barbara covered her face with her hands.

"I had to tell him the truth then, Nona, and there is something else I shall never forget, and that is the way Lieutenant Kelley looked at me and the apology he made, oh, not to me, but to my husband: 'It has been my mistake, of course, all along, Mrs. Thornton, you cannot have intended me to misunderstand you. I have simply been inconceivably stupid, and I hardly know what amends I do not owe to your husband.' Then, Nona, he looked such a boy and as if he had been so horribly hurt in his faith in women and in his own sense of honor. I don't know what I said to him afterwards, I scarcely know what I am saying to you now. Of course I told him that he did not really care for me, but, somehow, I am afraid he does, Nona, and oh, isn't it dreadful that one cannot suffer alone for one's sins in this world? I deserve anything, but Hugh isn't responsible and neither is

Dick, and yet they must both be unhappy for my fault. I think, perhaps, when I tell Dick of my deception he may not care to have me for his wife any longer."

Barbara appeared so utterly dejected that if the situation had been less serious Nona would have smiled. Yet, somehow, she could not find anything to make her feel like smiling at this moment. She thought of saying to Barbara that, perhaps, she need not make a confession to her husband. Then Nona decided that she had no right to offer any possible advice. Since she was unmarried herself, she did not understand how complete a confidence should exist between a man and wife. It might also be a safeguard to Barbara's future if she felt impelled to confide her first breach of faith to her husband. Nona knew Dick Thornton well enough not to envy Barbara her confession.

"Dick is coming tomorrow. I had a letter from him today saying he had been given a short leave and would take the first train to me. I suppose I ought to be happy over his coming, but I am not.

Later it might have been easier to have told him what I must tell him. Perhaps, after a while, I won't even feel quite so wicked as I do now. It is a perfectly horrid sensation, Nona! Of course you are such a saint you can't even imagine how I feel!"

Then Nona did manage to laugh, and getting up from her chair she went over and sat down on the bed beside Barbara, putting her arm about her.

"I know you do not wish me to say, Bab, that I think you have been quite square. But please don't think I desire to criticise you; I am just dreadfully sorry and wish there were something I could say or do that might help. I know you were simply lonely and that life at the hospital has seemed rather hard and dull after your happy time in your own home with Dick. If we had only been very busy at the hospital it would have made a great difference. Perhaps Mildred or Eugenia——"

"Mildred and Eugenia!" Nona felt her hand being tightly clutched.

"Oh, for goodness sake promise me never to breathe a word of what I have told you either to Mildred or Gene. I am sure Gene would never allow me to remain at the hospital afterwards. And, somehow, to have one's right to be a Red Cross nurse taken away would make one feel as a soldier must who is stripped of his uniform and sword. Then you see Mildred might possibly tell my mother-in-law what I have done and she has never been any too enthusiastic over me as a wife for Dick."

The faintest suggestion of a smile appearing on Barbara's face at this moment, Nona felt the gloom of the situation a bit lightened.

"Suppose you allow me to help you to bed then, Bab, and let us not talk about disagreeable things any more tonight. As Dick is to arrive tomorrow, at least there is no point in your looking as if you had been ill. Just remember you can count on me if I can be useful in any possible fashion."

"You are a dear, Nona," Barbara answered, as she began slowly to follow her

friend's advice, "especially as I have been pretty neglectful and have seemed to be indifferent to you lately. But you know I never have been indifferent really. It was only that I was doing something of which I realized you would not approve and I did not wish you to know."

Nona made no answer, but after waiting until Barbara was comfortably in bed she kissed her and went quietly away.

As a matter of fact, she had told Barbara nothing of what she had intended telling her. But she could not make up her mind to burden her further with the information that Lieutenant Kelley might have to meet another disillusion, more serious, perhaps, than the loss of his faith in her. For there can be nothing in the life of a soldier that comes so close to him as having his loyalty doubted.

Neither did Nona mention that Barbara might also have to clear herself of an impossible suspicion. But she was not sorry that Richard Thornton was to be with his wife for the next few days. If any difficulty should arise, Dick's reputation was a sufficient guarantee for them both.

CHAPTER XVII

An Explanation which did not Explain

FOLLOWING his letter, the next afternoon Richard Thornton arrived at the American hospital on a short visit to his wife.

He looked thin, but bronzed and strong, and intensely enthusiastic over his recent ambulance work. Since the United States had entered the war with the Allies, the American ambulance men were permitted to run greater risks and to render more valuable service.

On his breast Richard Thornton wore the medal of the *Croix de Guerre*, presented him by the French government for bravery under fire. With six other ambulance men he had been present at a gas attack near Verdun and with them had succeeded in rescuing nearly a thousand soldiers.

Preferring to tell Barbara the news himself, Dick had not written her of his recent honor.

The thought of his wife's being in France at the same time with him and engaged in Red Cross work was seldom out of Dick Thornton's mind; nevertheless, he had not allowed his unceasing desire to see her to interfere for a moment with his work. Not until he believed he had earned a short respite did Dick ask for and receive a short leave of absence.

Therefore, during her husband's stay, Eugenia arranged that Barbara should have but few duties at the hospital, that she might remain continuously with him.

Only Eugenia asked as a favor that on some afternoon Dick go in with her for a brief call upon Captain Castaigne. From his wife's letters Dick, of course, knew of Captain Castaigne's condition and of the strange discovery of him.

It was two days after Dick's arrival when, one afternoon just before dinner, Eugenia and Dick decided to make their visit.

For the first time since his arrival at the hospital Eugenia changed from her Red Cross uniform to a dress of which her husband had at one time been especially fond,

a smoke-colored chiffon, with lavender and gray tones in it. The dress Captain Castaigne had once said reminded him of the soft colors of the twilight and suggested the peace and happiness which Eugenia's presence always gave him.

In a chair by the window, with his hand resting upon Duke, Captain Castaigne was sitting, when Eugenia and Richard Thornton went in to him.

The bandage had been removed from his eyes, now covering only the wound over his temple. Again he wore the uniform of a Captain in the army of France.

In returning to his old uniform Eugenia had hoped that it might in some fashion affect her husband's memory of the past. But Captain Castaigne had made no comment upon putting it on and no one knew whether it had made the slightest impression upon him.

Eugenia entered the room first.

Since her original discovery that her husband had no memory of her, Eugenia had never come into his presence without an almost morbid sense of pain and shrinking.

Whatever misfortune had befallen him, she still cared for him so deeply, it seemed incredible that he should even desire her society less than he did that of the other people about him. Certainly he preferred Jeanne's, the little French girl, who had first rescued him, and Mildred Thornton's, who was now giving him such devoted care.

With the noise of Eugenia's and Richard Thornton's approach, Captain Castaigne slowly turned his head. In the past he and Dick had known each other but slightly, yet Eugenia felt she wished some man friend's opinion of her husband, who was not a physician.

"Gene, where have you been? I have a headache and am lonely. I don't understand your leaving me so long alone," Captain Castaigne began in an injured tone, as Eugenia walked toward him.

She thought that he had mistaken her for little Jeanne, whom he never forgot and was never weary of seeing. Frequently when Jeanne did not appear at the hospital at the hour he desired her, Captain Castaigne became annoyed and disappointed.

"It is late, Jeanne will be here tomorrow. But I brought a friend who wishes to talk to you, Henri," Eugenia answered quietly, yet not looking at her husband, because of the tears which had suddenly blinded her eyes.

Duke had deserted his master and walked over to her. He never left his master alone, but if Eugenia were in the room, he understood that she required his sympathy and understanding the more.

But Captain Castaigne's manner was now both aggrieved and puzzled.

"You won't be with me until tomorrow, Gene? Why are you deserting me tonight?"

Apparently Captain Castaigne had not noticed Richard Thornton's presence.

Dick had come only a few feet into the room, for at Captain Castaigne's first words he had stopped and without speaking was observing the other man closely.

He saw, of course, that Captain Castaigne appeared like a man who had been wretchedly ill. He was thin and languid, his face had the wounded man's pallor; besides, there was the effect of the bandage.

But Dick was accustomed to seeing wounded men. What he did not behold in Captain Castaigne's face was the blankness, the expression of mental weakness which he had been led to expect.

Yet even while he watched, Eugenia had walked over and taken both of Captain Castaigne's hands into her own and was leaning over, holding them closely for a moment.

Then she said with perfect calmness:

"No, dear, I did not understand you. Of course I shall not leave you tonight and never again until you wish me to go."

Then Captain Castaigne had laughed with a suggestion of his old teasing gayety toward his wife.

"Do I often send you away from me, Gene? But tell me what does all this mean? Why do I find myself here? Have I been ill and have you brought me to your own hospital to care for me? But no, you you are not wearing your Red Cross uniform."

Then, without waiting to hear more, Richard Thornton had slipped quickly

away to find Barbara, and Barbara had then found Nona and Mildred to confide her husband's great news.

That same evening after dinner Barbara chose for her own confession.

Perhaps she believed that Dick would be more lenient because of the scene he had witnessed. Perhaps the thought of the exquisite happiness in the reunion between Eugenia and Captain Castaigne made the shadow between herself and her husband the more painful. Whatever the reason, Barbara selected the hour when they were walking together after dusk to whisper the history of the past few weeks.

At first, without in the least understanding, and afterwards in deeper and deeper silence, Dick listened to the story.

Only when Barbara had broken down did he reply in a voice which she had never heard from him before:

"Suppose we go back to our room, Barbara, so that I can fully grasp what this is you are telling me. It is so unlike any conception I ever had of you that you must forgive my appearing stupid. No, of

course, Lieutenant Kelley was in no way to blame. I am almost as sorry for him as I am for myself. Only you cannot have hurt his ideal of you as you have mine. But please don't cry out here where people can see you."

"But I will unless you tell me what you are going to do?" Bab insisted like a frightened child.

"What I am going to do isn't so important as the way I feel, is it, Bab?" Dick answered.

Afterwards, no one except Nona Davis appreciated why Barbara went about during the rest of her husband's visit with a white, unhappy face and frightened dark-blue eyes.

Nona did not speak to her on the subject of her confession to her husband, realizing that she must wait until Barbara showed a desire to bestow her confidence. Yet several times Nona wished that she felt she had the right to talk to Dick. They had been good friends in the past, surely he must see that Barbara had merely behaved like a spoiled child and would not

allow her one offense to spoil their happiness. Yet certainly he looked even more unhappy than Barbara.

But without doubt neither Dick nor Barbara received the attention that would have been bestowed upon them under ordinary circumstances.

For the entire staff at the hospital, including Mildred Thornton, who was Richard Thornton's sister and Barbara's sister-in-law, and also Mollie Drew, were too excited by the unexpected change for the better in Captain Castaigne.

Captain Castaigne had not miraculously recovered. He had no recollection of his injury nor his illness afterwards, neither could he recall many circumstances in his past life before or since the outbreak of the war. Yet the great fact was that he had recognized his wife and now wished her with him constantly.

Very slowly, very painstakingly, Eugenia, under the doctor's advice, was teaching Captain Castaigne to recall other things. Yet, after all, it was better that he should not remember too much at the beginning.

The thought of the war, of his own suffering, of the tragedy through which his beloved land was passing, were happily gone from his mind.

Perhaps, never in their married life had he and Eugenia been so happy. Always until now they had enjoyed only a few hurried days or weeks together, with Captain Castaigne about to return to the front and Eugenia to her nursing.

On the day following Captain Castaigne's recognition of his wife, Mildred Thornton quietly assumed management of the hospital. This, of course, was after consultation with the doctors and nurses on the staff and was regarded as only temporary. But for the present Eugenia must be spared every outside responsibility.

Yet there was one serious piece of information she could not be spared.

Three days after Captain Castaigne's partial recovery the officer in command at the American camp sent Lieutenants Martin and Kelley and a secret service officer for a private interview with Madame Castaigne. She spent two hours with them behind a locked door.

By accident Nona Davis chanced to be in the front of the hospital when the officers arrived, and although they bowed to her formally, not one of them showed the least inclination to talk to her, nor to explain the nature of the errand.

Knowing what she did from Philip Dawson's confidence, so much and at the same time so little, Nona naturally endured a miserable day. She was fearful that Barbara Thornton would have to face even graver charges. For after her interview Eugenia had gone directly to her husband and, so far as Nona knew, had spoken to no one of what she had learned from the interview.

Nona was also puzzled. For Lieutenant Kelley to be one of the officers who came to the hospital did not suggest his guilt. Yet, unless he and Barbara were in some way involved, why should Madame Castaigne be told a purely military secret?

That night, after Captain Castaigne had fallen asleep, happily for Nona, Eugenia chose her as her solitary confidant.

Later, the same information was discussed

by every human being inside the American hospital. But by what method the news was disseminated no one could have told. Certainly neither Nona Davis nor Madame Castaigne were responsible.

The truth was that Agatha Burton, who had been working as a Red Cross nurse for nearly two years, was a German spy. She had gone into the Red Cross training with but this one idea and plan in mind. The months she had devoted to nursing in Italy, keeping faith and gaining an excellent record as a nurse were to render her reputation above suspicion when the hour of the United States' entrance into the war and the sending of American soldiers to France arrived.

Moreover, Agatha Burton was an American. There was no reason why the authorities who had investigated her history, in the effort to discover whether or not she would be an acceptable Red Cross nurse in the Allied countries, should have suspected her disloyalty.

Yet the drama and the disloyalty went deeper than Agatha Burton's share.

Three years before, at the outbreak of the war, Charles Anderson had enlisted as a private in the United States army. His people were German-Americans, but for this and for other causes, he had expressed his desire to prove his devotion to the United States.

There are many loyal German-Americans in our country and the sympathy of the American people has, from the beginning of the present war, gone out to them. So no one dreamed that Charles Anderson wore the uniform of the United States army merely as a mask for treachery. Yet Germany has been responsible for strange, distorted ideas of right and justice in her war. At one time the spy, after his death at least, enjoyed fame in his own country, the land for which he often suffered both dishonor and death. But Germany has rendered dishonor more dishonorable.

The German spy is the man or woman who, after eating your bread, living under your roof, sharing all that your generosity has to give, in the end betrays you.

Agatha Burton had been engaged to

Charles Anderson from the time they were boy and girl. The far-reaching scheme of treachery and dishonor had, from the beginning been his, and Agatha only his accomplice.

It was a feminine weakness, yet in spite of their surprise and horror, Eugenia and Nona confessed quietly to each other that they were glad Agatha was on her way to the United States. Her case would be dealt with on her arrival there.

Neither would Charles Anderson's name nor his fate ever be openly discussed at the American camp.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Command

A WEEK or ten days later, in the early autumn, the order was received at the American camp for a limited number of picked American troops to be sent to the fighting line in France.

The order had been for some time eagerly expected, yet the information was not published either in the American or in the European press.

The American soldiers were to have their first trial by fire in France without having the fact heralded or discussed. In the trenches they were now prepared to test the training in modern warfare which they had been undergoing since their arrival at their own camp in France.

Under secret orders and at night the men were to march out, not even their own comrades in arms being informed of the direction in which they were to travel nor behind

what particular battle front they were to be stationed.

Yet the chosen troops were permitted to say farewell to their friends, provided that nothing except good-byes were said. However, the men could scarcely have betrayed the secret of their destination, since only the officers in command had been informed. They were to march in twenty-four hours after the order.

At the nearby American hospital, it was Mollie Drew who was the first of the Red Cross nurses to be told the stirring news.

Mollie was not engaged to Guy Ellis. She had insisted upon this both to Barbara and Nona. But she had confessed there was a kind of understanding between them, and when the war was over, if she and Guy had both played their parts faithfully, and his parents did not object to a poor girl, then Mollie was willing to concede there might be an engagement.

Nevertheless, as soon as he had received permission from his superior officer, Captain John Martin, Guy came straight to her.

Mollie also reported the news of Lieu-

tenant Martin's promotion to a captaincy, which he had been awarded only a few days before.

It was shortly before luncheon when Guy arrived at the hospital and Nona could not help wondering, after Mollie had imparted the information of the withdrawal of a number of the American troops, whether Captain Martin would make an effort to see her before he left camp. For his desire had been granted and he was to be one of the officers in charge of the first corps of American troops in the fighting area in France.

She kept the thought at the back of her mind all during the day, no matter in what occupation she chanced to be engaged. Nona felt she would like to see Captain Martin before he left for the front, if for no other reason than to congratulate him on his promotion.

It was after dinner that evening when Captain Martin, accompanied by Lieutenant Kelley, came to the hospital.

But to Nona's secret surprise Captain Martin made no effort to see her alone. He and Lieutenant Kelley asked for Ma-

dame Castaigne, for Miss Thornton and Mrs. Thornton, as well as for Miss Davis and two or three other Red Cross nurses who were also their friends.

Nona was interested in watching the meeting between Lieutenant Kelley and Richard Thornton.

Dick was to leave the next day to continue his ambulance work. Whether Barbara asked him to meet Lieutenant Kelley, or whether he chose to make the best of the opportunity Nona did not, of course, know.

She only saw that Barbara introduced the two men in as matter-of-fact a fashion as she could manage and that, after looking at each other steadily for a barely perceptible moment, they instinctively shook hands.

Later, without even a word with Nona that the entire group of friends could not hear, Captain Martin made his adieus. Moreover, during the few moments of his visit he had appeared much more pleased by Eugenia's congratulations than by Nona's effort to express her pleasure at his good fortune.

After their final leave-taking Nona confessed to herself that she was a little disappointed. She knew, of course, that as soon as he recovered Captain Martin would forget the emotion he had believed he felt for her during his convalescence. However, she had not really expected him to forget it so entirely he would not even have a feeling of especial friendliness for her. And there was ever the thought that a soldier's good-bye might be a final one.

Nona was glad Lieutenant Kelley was accompanying his friend. Whatever small differences the two men had formerly had, had disappeared entirely. The faith in him under stress, which Captain Martin had shown, the younger soldier would not forget.

That night not only Nona Davis, but nearly every nurse, doctor, patient and servant at the American hospital lay awake, or slept only fitfully. They were waiting and hoping to hear the tramping of the feet of the American soldiers on their way to this strange paradox of a war, which is being fought on through the years for the final award of a world peace.

Toward dawn Nona believed she heard the men marching past the hospital.

Slipping to the window, she saw stretched along the road a long, double row of khaki-clad figures. They were marching in silence, each soldier carrying his pack and rifle. There were no flags flying, no beating of drums. The men were going to their day's work, to the work the new day had appointed for them. But when the last figures had passed, in the east Nona saw the first rose-colored lights of the morning.

She went back to bed then, not having awakened anyone. Eugenia was now with Captain Castaigne.

Alone, Nona prayed that her countrymen might meet the great test without faltering and that the rose light in the sky was an omen of good for the future.

CHAPTER XIX

A Parting of the Ways

AFTER Dick Thornton had gone back to his ambulance work, Barbara told Nona that she had made her husband a promise. This was because she felt that she owed it to him to do what he wished of her, and also because Dick's wishes were a part with her own desire. As soon as there was an opportunity, and Eugenia had no especial need of her services, Barbara had agreed to return home. She would find another nurse in New York and send her to the American hospital, paying her expenses; so that the Red Cross work would not lose but gain by the exchange.

Barbara wanted her home and her baby and would wait there as serenely as she could until the war was over and Dick again at home.

And Nona agreed that in this Barbara

would be doing the wiser and finer thing. It is not intended that all of us desert our obvious duties for more romantic and stirring ones, although there is, of course, a war duty for each one of us. The personal sacrifice it may be of one's love, of one's money, sometimes only of one's desire, is what counts in the end.

Unexpectedly, Nona Davis was also to face a difficult problem. She was not aware of what was before her nor would she have said the fact, or rather her acceptance of the fact, involved a problem. But she was to find out very soon.

She and Philip Dawson had continued seeing each other in their former friendly fashion whenever it was possible to meet.

Philip had apologized to Nona for having mentioned the suspicion in camp against Lieutenant Kelley, saying that he himself had met and deserved the fate of all officious persons. However, he added that he was so glad Lieutenant Kelley had been entirely cleared that he was willing to accept his punishment, provided Nona would finally forgive him.

There was no mention between them of Barbara Thornton's name. Philip believed Nona had told her friend of the gossip involving her name, but realized that she would certainly not wish to discuss Mrs. Thornton with him. Nor was there anything further from his wish.

There were so many other interesting things in this wide world for them to talk about, subjects which had nothing to do with gossip, or scandal, or with other people.

Always there was the war and what might take place tomorrow. Always there was an argument of whether peace was six months away, a year, or four years. Then there were the books which Nona and Philip had read, and Nona was obliged to confess that Philip had read a great many more than she had. But then he was five years older and writing was his profession. Besides, there was always the inexhaustible subject of themselves. Nona was really not aware of how much they did talk to each other of their past histories, of their future desires and dreams. But Philip Dawson knew and

understood far better than Nona what his own attitude confessed. He had also other reasons for knowing, deeper and more compelling reasons. Yet, because he was older and in many ways wiser than Nona, he appreciated the little streak of coldness in her nature, which was really more shyness than coldness, and feared to awaken her too soon.

Fanciful as we may consider the idea, the old Greeks knew the eternal types of women. In many girls, and particulary in many American girls, we find a faint echo of Diana, who, although she suffered fewer fears than other women, was the more frightened before love.

Before speaking of his feeling to Nona, Philip Dawson would like to have waited longer, to have been able to be more sure of her affection. At the present time, however, he was as much under the command of his superior officer as a soldier.

Considering that he owed it both to Nona and to Madame Castaigne's consistent friendliness toward him, Philip Dawson went first to her.

After their talk Eugenia recognized once more that she had recently permitted herself to become too engrossed in her personal affairs. She had been thinking of asking for leave and taking Captain Castaigne to his own home in southern France. Now she made up her mind that this would be the wisest thing for them to do.

Certainly if anything which was unfortunate for Nona in the future had come about through her carelessness, Sonya Valesky would never forgive her. Then Eugenia argued that Nona was by no means a child and had the right to choose her own life, although what her choice would be Eugenia could not guess.

Yet she did arrange that Nona should see Philip Dawson alone the next evening, which was infringing upon one of the hospital rules. But Philip Dawson had explained that he was forced to leave France almost at once and there was no other time.

Nona only knew, however, that he wished to see her for an important reason, or that he had made the excuse of an important

reason. She supposed he was too busy for them to spend an afternoon together.

It was beginning to turn cool and the night had the brilliance of the sky in early autumn. Only the stars were out, but later the harvest moon would rise over many fields of France and other lands which war had laid waste.

Tonight Philip Dawson and Nona were both glad that the country surrounding them had so far remained serene.

Nona had put on a wrap, but wore nothing on her head.

As they were walking up and down the hospital grounds, which were not large, but had a few shade trees and a small garden, Philip Dawson stopped suddenly and looked closely at Nona.

"Nona," he began almost irritably, for they had almost unconsciously grown into the habit of calling each other by their first names, "I sometimes wish you did not so often remind me of the old fairy story of 'Beauty and the Beast' when I am with you. It is not that I wish you less fair, my lady, or that until recently I have ever

given much thought to my own unhappy appearance."

Nona laughed, having by this time entirely forgotten that she had ever considered her companion less interesting and less good looking than she did at present. For, of course, she had come to the frequent feminine conclusion that she infinitely preferred a man to be clever and well bred in his appearance than merely conventionally handsome.

"Don't stop walking, please, Philip," she returned, not answering his foolish speech. "We have only a little while together. I promised Gene we would not be long. Surely you haven't anything uncomfortable to tell me tonight."

Philip did not walk on, however, so that Nona stood still, but turned her eyes up toward the sky. She had the impression one so often has that assuredly she was seeing more stars tonight than ever before.

"Would you mind looking at me for a moment, please, Nona?" Philip Dawson suggested, and Nona realized that his voice was not entirely steady, in spite of its humorous inflection.

"I hope you may not think that what I mean to tell you is uncomfortable. You see, to me it is as big and as vastly important as the sky over our heads. And this is not so absurd as it sounds. I love you, Nona, and I am going to start to the United States tomorrow. I have some information which the editor of my paper thinks I had best not try to write over here, but must bring to him in person."

"But you will be coming back," Nona answered, with the feminine impulse of putting off facing a situation.

"Only if you say you care for me and wish me to come, Nona. As far as my work goes, I have no idea where I may be sent after my return to the United States. But I shall try to come back to France."

"You don't mean you expect me to say just how I feel toward you tonight, Philip, when you have never suggested you were in love with me before," Nona returned almost indignantly.

It struck her that Philip Dawson would not be like a good many other men. If she told him she did not love him tonight,

he would not offer his love to her again. The idea made her indignant, and yet if she were never to see him after this—yet how could she know her own desire?

"I don't think you are fair, Philip," Nona answered.

"No, I suppose not," he returned. "You see, Nona, I had not thought of being fair. I only thought, when the news came so suddenly that I must part from you, of how much I cared for you and hoped you felt as I do."

Crossing his hands behind him, Philip walked up and down with that little trick of having his head slightly in front of him, which amused Nona always and with which she had grown so familiar. It rather hurt her now, as she stood watching him.

Surely in the three years of her war nursing she should have grown accustomed to the everlasting partings for which, among its other sorrows, war is responsible. Yet lately had she not allowed herself to grow dependent upon her friendship with Philip Dawson, believing that as his work was to report the news of the American camp, he

would remain in the same neighborhood as long as she remained? But certainly she had not thought of him as her lover. Their friendship had only been more interesting than any other.

"Won't you marry me, Nona, when I can come back for you, and not let us discuss being fair just at present?" Philip Dawson protested with a kind of whimsical appeal which was also characteristic of him.

But Nona remained silent.

The moment before she had been surprised, now she saw what was at stake with almost painful clearness. Whether she was to lose her friend and lover as well, Nona could not answer him tonight. She had been right, Philip had not been fair.

Men are frequently not fair to girls in this self-same way. They will suddenly ask her for all she has to give, her love and the hazard of her life as well, expecting her to have understood and made up her mind before he had spoken. Yet now and then, following this plan, girls have made tragic mistakes. Nona had come near this

mistake once, but in Philip Dawson's case she had not repeated it.

"I am sorry to have you go, Philip, and I shall miss you dreadfully, I don't care to think how much. But I can't make you any promise, I can't answer your question now. If you don't care for me enough to wait until we have been parted and I have time to think——"

Philip Dawson made an impatient movement.

"Nona, dear, of course I'll wait if I must. You give me no choice. But I do wish you would remember that I belong to the most impatient profession in the world and that it is a great mistake to spend valuable time in life in making decisions. Will you write me to Paris?"

Nona laughed and slipped her arm through her companion's.

"Yes, I will write you to Paris and you need not inform me how impatient you are. I don't know a great deal about you, but I do know that much."

Then for the next ten minutes the girl and man walked up and down in the garden,

talking, perhaps, of other things, but thinking only of their farewell. Nevertheless, Nona was obdurate in her decision and it was, perhaps, as well for their future that Philip Dawson learned tonight she could hold out against his wish. There were not many people in his world who did this for long.

There was a gate before the hospital and she said good-bye to him standing outside. Just for an instant as she saw his long, slender figure disappearing, Nona had the impulse to call him back. The United States seemed so uncomfortably far away. Nona resisted her inclination.

Besides, almost at the same time an unexpected sound attracted her attention.

Except for Philip who was moving rapidly out of sight, the road before the hospital had appeared to be empty.

It was about ten o'clock and there were no carts or trucks filled with provisions on their way to the camp. The movement back and forth between the neighboring villages took place in the early morning and during the day.

Yet Nona saw two figures coming from the village toward the hospital and from the opposite direction to the one Philip Dawson had used.

Possibly someone had been taken suddenly ill and was being brought to the hospital for care.

A moment later Nona recognized that the newcomers were women, and then that they were Madame Bonnèt and Berthe.

With an exclamation of surprise she made a little rush forward, trying to take hold of Madame Bonnèt's hand.

But in her hand and pressed close against her Nona discovered that she held something warm and soft, which fluttered and made gentle noises.

"Why, Madame Bonnèt, is there anything the matter? Are either you or Berthe ill? Won't you come in and let me find Eugenia?"

Madame Bonnèt shook her head.

"No, my dear, my errand is to you and it is rather a surprising one.

She held out the carrier pigeon, which she had been holding in her hand.

"Do you remember one day you asked me to name one of my carrier pigeons for you and tied a little coin about its throat so we could know it? Well, I gave that particular pigeon to Captain Martin by his request, when he went away. And tonight, dear, the pigeon came winging back home. Berthe and I found her just reaching the dovecote, after twilight, and bearing this letter addressed to you. We brought it to you at once. Of course the message may be only a personal one. but then none of us know where the American soldiers have gone or what may have happened to them and the word may bring news of importance. I confess I am frightened."

And Madame Bonnèt paused, a little out of breath from nervousness and her rapid walk.

Nona's own hands shook as she opened the letter brought her by so strange and gentle a messenger from an unknown place.

She had a flashlight, which she always carried, so that she could read it quickly.

"No, Madame Bonnèt, the letter is only personal. I am sorry you hurried to bring

it to me," Nona explained, wondering if Madame Bonnèt and Berthe were as amazed as she was by Captain Martin's action, and also wondering how much she betrayed her own confusion.

But, fortunately, Madame Bonnèt and Berthe insisted on returning home immediately, so that Nona could go upstairs to her room alone.

If she had been surprised earlier in the evening, she was the more so now. Captain Martin had written her a letter which one might have believed a poet could have written, never a soldier. Certainly she had misunderstood his character. But then do men and women ever understand each other?

However, Nona's last thought was that she would ask Philip Dawson to call upon Sonya Valesky in New York—and then if Sonya liked him—

However, Nona really knew that no one's opinion would make a great deal of difference now that she was infinitely surer of her own mind than she would have believed possible an hour before.